

**QUALITIES OF MALAYSIAN ACCOUNTING GRADUATES AND THEIR JOB
PERFORMANCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYERS**

By

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ABSTRACT

Research findings suggest that graduates lack various qualities that are important in today's job market. These include knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics that might directly influence their job performance. This phenomenon is not only common in developed countries, but also in developing countries like Malaysia. In Malaysia, for example, graduates from local universities and colleges are struggling for employment due to lack of essential skills. It is due to the lack of studies involving the qualities of accounting graduates in Malaysia that this study was carried out to fill this gap. The main objective of this study was to determine the level of Malaysian accounting graduates' qualities from the perspective of employers and the effect on their job performance. Graduates' qualities were measured using knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics. 325 employers from auditing firms in Malaysia were selected as the respondents in this study. Data was managed and analyzed using SPSS version 18.0. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly perceived that certain qualities should be given high priority in the accounting curriculum. This study provides evidence that accountants and employers perceived alike on fundamental qualities that must be incorporated in the curriculum such as financial accounting, managerial accounting and auditing/assurance services, global/international business, taxation, accounting application system, written and oral communication skills, applying analytical techniques, critical thinking, assertiveness, flexibility, self-confidence and decisiveness. The findings also suggest that there were significant relationships between accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance. It was found that accounting graduates' qualities which contribute more than three-quarters to their job performance, become the most important predictor. This study suggests that the higher the qualities of the accounting graduates, the greater their performance in the workplace. The findings of this study hope to shed important information on accounting graduates' employability issues and ways to perhaps improve the situation in the future.

Keyword: accounting graduates, graduates' qualities, knowledge, skills, abilities, other characteristics, job performance

ABSTRAK

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para siswazah memiliki pelbagai kekurangan dalam beberapa aspek kualiti yang penting untuk pasaran kerja pada masa kini. Ini termasuklah aspek pengetahuan, kemahiran, keupayaan serta ciri-ciri lain yang boleh mempengaruhi prestasi kerja mereka. Fenomena ini bukan sahaja berlaku di negara-negara maju, tetapi juga di negara membangun seperti Malaysia. Siswazah daripada kolej dan universiti tempatan di Malaysia berdepan dengan masalah pengangguran disebabkan kekurangan dalam aspek kualiti seperti di atas. Kajian mengenai aspek kualiti siswazah perakaunan di Malaysia adalah kurang. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan bagi memenuhi jurang tersebut. Objektif utama kajian ini ialah bagi menentukan tahap kualiti siswazah perakaunan di Malaysia daripada perspektif majikan dan kesannya ke atas prestasi kerja mereka. Kualiti siswazah diukur menggunakan pemboleh ubah pengetahuan, kemahiran, keupayaan dan ciri-ciri lain. Seramai 325 orang majikan daripada firma audit di Malaysia telah terlibat sebagai responden dalam kajian ini. Data yang diperolehi diurus dan dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 18.0. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa kebanyakan responden amat bersetuju bahawa beberapa kualiti perlu diberi keutamaan dalam kurikulum perakaunan. Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa akauntan dan majikan sependapat tentang kepentingan beberapa kualiti yang perlu diperkuatkan dalam kurikulum seperti perakaunan kewangan, perakaunan pengurusan, pengauditan, perniagaan antarabangsa, percukaian, aplikasi sistem perakaunan, kemahiran komunikasi lisan dan penulisan, aplikasi teknik analitik, pemikiran kritikal, ketegasan, keyakinan diri, fleksibiliti dan membuat keputusan. Dapatan kajian turut mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara kualiti siswazah perakaunan dan prestasi kerja mereka. Kualiti graduan perakaunan didapati memberi sumbangan sehingga satu perempat kepada prestasi kerja graduan. Dapatan kajian ini diharap dapat memberi gambaran dan maklumat yang penting mengenai isu kebolehpasaran graduan perakaunan dan cadangan bagi memperbaiki situasi ini pada masa hadapan.

Kata kunci: siswazah perakaunan, kualiti siswazah, pengetahuan, kemahiran, keupayaan, ciri-ciri lain, prestasi kerja

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Accounting Association
BRC	The British Retail Consortium
CPA	Certified Public Accountant
GPA	Grade point average
ICAA	Institute of Chartered Accountant in Australia
IES	International Education Standards
IFAC	International Federation of Accountants
IMA	Institute of Management Accountants
KSAO	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other Characteristics
MBA	Master of Bussiness Administration
MIA	Malaysia Institute of Accountant
MICPA	Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NACE	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NAIT	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
NJIT	New Jersey Institute of Techology
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
QHE	Quality in Higher Education
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SPSS	Statitistical Package for Social Science
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Business world today is highly competitive. Doing well in business today is not a guarantee of tomorrow's survival (Woods & King, 2002). In many aspects, change in business landscape governs how business should and must be operationalised. With rapid changes in new technologies, the existence of global economies and approaching dominance of niche marketing, employers need people who can deal with these changes effectively. As a result, various efforts have been taken to develop an efficient and responsive education and training system to fulfil the demand for knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce (Economic Planning Unit, 2005). In addition, the workforce has to be equipped with positive values to ensure Malaysia becomes a developed nation by the year 2020.

The role of accounting and its profession is changing. Over the last decade, there has been increasing pressure from industry, government and accrediting bodies for changes in accounting education to ensure development of appropriate skills and knowledge for its professionals. For some time now, commissioned reports into higher education (e.g., AC Nielsen Research Services 2000; Hager, Holland & Beckett, 2002) have highlighted that accounting graduates are lacking -specific knowledge for employability. One way in which universities have sought to articulate their role and purpose is focusing and analysing the qualities of their graduates, and taking remedy actions to improve (Barrie,

2006). However, academics constantly grapple to understand the concept of graduate attributes in the context of different discipline backgrounds. Thompson, Treleaven, Kamvounias, Beem, and Hill (2008) stated that graduate attributes are referred across education and training as key skills, generic attributes, key competencies, transferable skills, and employability and soft skills.

As the market continues to expand, the skills and attributes demanded from accounting graduates are shifting. Seeking to enhance employability or work readiness through educational initiatives to boost national wealth is a global issue (Little, 2003). Reports commissioned by higher education stakeholders (e.g., Business Higher Education Round Table, 1993; AC Nielsen Research Services, 2000) and those monitoring the changing face of the accounting profession (Birrell, 2007; Birrell & Healy, 2008) have all recognised that a strong disciplinary knowledge base does not, of itself, guarantee jobs. In a report on *Employability skills for the future* (2002), written from, “employers perspective”, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry identified the type of generic skills (e.g., communication, team work) and personal characteristics (e.g., loyalty, commitment, enthusiasm, self-management) that the authors concluded were needed in the workplace to ensure success as an employee or self-employed worker (Taylor, 2005). Moreover, de la Harpe, Radloff, and Wyber (2000) suggest the concern from employers that undergraduate programmes are failing to provide graduates with the necessary skills for their careers is a worldwide issue.

In a dynamic and competitive environment, accounting graduates are expected to have acquired the technical skills of the profession. More importantly the graduates should emerge from university with a broader range of attributes as well as being able to demonstrate competence in the common vocational skills required in modern workplaces (CPA & ICAA, 2005; Jones & Sin, 2003; Sin, Jones & Petocz, 2007). In the Australian context, employers have been so dissatisfied with the skills and competencies of graduate (McClymont, Volkov, Gardiner, Behjat & Geoghegan, 2005; Thompson, 2006).

Others argue that the creation of key or transferable skills required by employers is not consistent with the mission of higher education (Barnett, 1997) and that the objective of a university education should instil in graduates commitment to lifelong learning and professional development (West, 1998). It is also not clear where to draw the line of demarcation between universities' responsibility to respond to employers' needs and, employers' responsibility to provide on-the-job training (Hesketh, 2000).

Despite this, in recent years, universities have developed and articulated coherent policies and frameworks to ensure development of graduate attributes and skills within and across programs (Sharp & Sparrow, 2002). This is to encourage skills and qualities as well as to ensure a sound understanding of subject matter. These skills and attributes include disciplinary or technical knowledge, expertise and qualities that prepare graduates as life-long learners, as agents for social good, and for personal development in light of an unknown future (Bowden & Marton, 1998; Albrecht & Sach, 2000; Howieson, 2003; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). However, Hodges and Burchell (2003) contend that the

literature has focused largely on the views of the academia, with few reports of research into employers' perspectives.

Malaysia is not the only country facing the shortage of accountants (Ekonomi, 2003). The shortage of accountants in Australia may be said to be critical, so that the federal government is placing qualified accountants on its demand list of skilled migrants (Ekonomi, 2003). In the United States (US), there has been a decade-long decline in the number of aspiring Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) (Levy, 2004). The primary contributing factor, quoted in many literatures on accounting profession in the US is the decline in the number of college accounting majors as a result of the increase in the examination requirement of new CPAs (Levy, 2004; Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2008). Apart from that, the recent economic downturn in the country have forced many accounting firms to reduce their college recruiting efforts and they now find themselves short-handed (Schroeder & Franz, 2004).

In the United Kingdom (UK), a shortage of qualified accountants has triggered a recruitment war among the country's top accountancy firms (Billiot, Galndon & McFerrin, 2004). Evans (2004) quoted Nicola Grimshaw, a director at a recruitment firm as saying that the big-four accounting firms in the UK are fighting each other for new recruits and are also targeting mid-tier firms for them while the mid-tier firms themselves are looking to recruit new staff. Therefore, if the developed nations are facing a shortage of accountants, it would not be a surprise for developing nations such as Malaysia to also face a shortage of such profession.

However, unlike the US, the shortage of accountants in Malaysia is not caused by the declining number of students enrolling in the accounting programs at the institutions of higher learning. Mohd Iskandar, Syed Adwam Wafa and Khundari (2002) reported that the number of enrolment for the accounting programs have been increasing over the years. According to 2004 statistics from the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, the accounting programs at the public universities are amongst the popular and competitive program.

Other factors include lack of employability skills needed by employers (Kamsah, 2004), lack of competencies or capabilities (Mohammad, Shahrin, Hasanan & Wahid & Danial, 2004) and not equipped with the relevant skills (Lee, 2003). The current economic challenges and globalisation are forcing employers in accounting sector to seek for competent accountants. Consequently, the graduates have to prepare themselves with skills desired by their future employers. Above and beyond good academic qualifications, employers also required their new employees to be equipped with relevant capabilities, skills, abilities and personal qualities. According to Nurita, Ainon and Shahrudin (2000), the representatives in a workshop organised by the Economic Planning Unit in July 2004 had agreed that the graduates are:

“...well equipped with the technical skills such as in ICT, management, accounting and marketing but they lack in certain aspects such as ability to communicate, skills to solve problems and poor interpersonal skill” (Nurita et al., 2007).

Furthermore, several researches in accounting education basically found out that the current educational system and practices in Malaysia are unable to deliver the graduates fully equipped with employability or generic skills required by present employers or in the future (Lee & Mande, 2003; Nurita et al., 2007).

1.1 Problem Statement

Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) is a responsible body to ensure the accountant and accounting profession is continuously upheld to the best standard. One of the responsibilities is to provide education and training their professionals. This also includes providing education at the tertiary level. In continuous effort to uphold quality and standards in the profession, the presidents of Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) and MIA Education Committee Chairman have stressed in MIA's roundtable on 'Accounting Education: Strengthening the Way Forward':

"We need to move away from the traditional definition of exams as assessment and focus on skills that are expected of accountants by the market."

Nik Mohd. Hasyudeen Yusoff, MIA President (MIA, 2006)

"The current generation of students exhibit two key weaknesses. Their ability to retain knowledge from earlier levels is diminishing because of the exam-oriented system, and their ability to integrate knowledge from earlier levels and across different disciplines is diminishing, meaning they are not industry-ready,"

Dr. S. Susela Devi, MIA Education Committee Chairman (MIA, 2006)

The roundtable examined the challenges of revising university education programmes in alignment with *Hala Tuju 2*, a report prepared by a committee formed by the Ministry of Education in 1999 discovered that universities are facing problems implementing the integrated case studies approach. The committee was formed to review the direction of all

undergraduate accounting programmes in Malaysia public universities. The main function of this committee, *Jawatankuasa Hala Tuju Program Perakaunan*, was to perform a comprehensive review of the accounting programmes, including the course structure, curriculum and duration of study.

MIA educational committee continues to increase and develop the Malaysian accounting education and profession. *Laporan Hala Tuju 2 Program Perakaunan* were then launched in 2006 focusing to alter the quality of accounting program in local higher institution to meet the global standards. A key objective of *Hala Tuju 2* is to produce graduates who can integrate and apply multidisciplinary knowledge to problem-solving once they start working. To achieve this, *Hala Tuju 2* recommends the implementation of the case study approach to teach students to identify problems, and subsequently to use their knowledge, skills, abilities and characteristics across various disciplines and solve problems.

Besides that, International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) have undertaken to revise and redraft the Eight International Education Standards (IESs) for IFAC member bodies and interested stakeholders in professional accounting education. The revision of IESs main objective is to develop competent professional accountants. Competence is defined as the ability to perform a work role to a defined standard with reference to working environments. To demonstrate competence in a role, a professional accountant must

possess the necessary professional, namely, knowledge, skills and value, ethics and attitudes.

Basically, competencies emphasises on two areas; (1) ability to perform to standards expected of professional accountants, and (2) appropriate level of knowledge, skills, values, ethics, and attitudes to achieve that competence.

Evidently, these are the areas of concern that MIA, IFAC and the Ministry of Higher Learning (MOHE) have taken to enhance the quality of the accounting graduates. Though the number of accounting graduates increased every year, the question remains whether accounting curriculum provided by the higher institutions fulfils the objectives of the national education policy and the needs of the profession (MIA, 2006) and their performance at the workplace. Among the common problems highlighted by employers are that newly employed accounting graduates do not have good communication skills and do not have adequate critical thinking, able to analyse logically and could not perform as expected in their job. Hence, it is worth to study, identify and examine the quality of accounting graduates and their job performance from the perspective of the employers. This is the primary reason why this research is pursued. It is to determine to what extent the curriculum designed by the accounting educators at the tertiary institutions fulfils the needs of the profession in practice. This study is also intended to investigate employers' perspectives towards accounting graduate qualities and their job performance in the market place.

Although a great deal has been written about job performance, it is still not clear how the factors purported to be associated with the qualities of the graduates (Beck & Wilson, 2001). Human resources management practices, organisational commitment, leadership styles and trust within the organisation are some of the organisational factors that have been associated with job performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The exact manner in which graduates' qualities influence the development of job performance is still not well understood. Empirical evidence is still needed to unravel the development of job performance.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is intended to investigate the current qualities of accounting graduates and their job performance from the view and perspective of employers. The research questions are:

1. What are the level of qualities (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) and job performance (task performance and OCB) of the Malaysian accounting graduates?
2. What is the relationship between Malaysian accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance (task performance and OCB)?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the level of accounting graduates qualities (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) and job performance (task performance and OCB) of the Malaysian accounting graduates.
2. Examine the relationship between Malaysian accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance (task performance and OCB).

The findings from this study is hope to provide the relevant information for accounting graduates to enhance employability skills and prepare themselves to enter the work market especially on knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristic.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The area of study is qualities of Malaysian Accounting and their job performance from the view of employers. Graduates qualities were measured using four variables that were knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics, while job performance was measured using task performance and OCB. This study focused only Malaysian Accounting graduates currently attaché in the auditing firm in Malaysia. It is focused on the dimensions of qualities and job performance from the perspectives of employers, particularly in the auditing firm in Klang Valley and did not focus on all employers in Malaysia. The population of this study was all employers in auditing firms; supervising the Malaysian Accounting graduates graduated from 2000 above.

1.5 Research Significant

This study contributes to the existing accounting literature pertaining to the accounting curriculum in Malaysia whereby the educators or curriculum planners can further improve and redesign the accounting curriculum. In addition, perceptions of the employers towards the accounting curriculum will be valuable information to accounting education policy makers, academics and future employers of the accounting graduates. The findings of this study potentially can be a guideline for the employers to evaluate job performance of their employees.

1.6 Definition of Terms

This study used the following terms:

1.6.1 Ability

Ability refers to the present power to perform a job function, to carry through with the activity while applying or using the associated knowledge (Lindner, 2001).

1.6.2 Accounting Degree

The degree of Bachelor of Accountancy (also known as Bachelor of Accounting) is the principal academic degree in accountancy in several countries, and is often the only degree recognised for subsequent practice. It is abbreviated B.Acy. or B.Acc. or B. Accty. It is also sometimes titled "Bachelor of Accounting Science" (B.Acc.Sci.) or "Bachelor of Comptrolling" (B.Compt.) (Agyemang & Unerman, 1998).

1.6.3 Employer

Legal entity that controls and directs a servant or worker under an express or implied contract of employment and pays (or is obligated to pay) him or her salary or wages in compensation (Lindner, 2001).

1.6.4 Job Performance

Behavioural components of task performance and organisational citizenship Behaviour (Motowildo, 2003).

1.6.5 Knowledge

Knowledge is a body of information that can be applied directly to the performance of tasks (Lindner, 2001).

1.6.6. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Behaviours that in aggregate, across time and across persons, contribute to organisational effectiveness (Moideenkutty, 2005).

1.6.7 Other Characteristics

Other characteristics are general category for other personal factors such as personality, willingness, interest, and motivation and such tangible factors as licenses, degrees, and years of experience (Lindner, 2001).

1.6.8 Perception

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Perception, on the other hand, describes one's ultimate experience of the world and typically involves further processing of sensory input. In practice, sensation and perception are virtually impossible to separate, because they are part of one continuous process (Hill, 1986). For this study, employers' experiences on the quality of the employees in their firm were used to describe their perception on the accounting graduates.

1.6.9 Skills

Skill refers to the proficient manual, verbal or mental manipulation of tools, techniques, methods ideas, or things (Lindner, 2001).

1.6.10 Task Performance

Behavioural dimensions of performance in job-specific task proficiency (Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger & Hemingway, 2005).

1.7 Organisation of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, research significant, and definition of terms and organisation of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review and the summary of previous research related to the qualities of the graduates especially in their knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics and job performance.

Chapter 3 describes the research framework and methodology employed in this study. Hypotheses development, research design, sample, data collection, research instrument, operational definitions and measurement of variables and methods of data analysis are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 discusses the data analyses and reports on the statistical testing results. The discussion starts with the profile of the respondents, followed by the presentation of results of the analysis of independent and dependent variables using reliability analysis. Descriptive analysis and the results of hypotheses testing are also presented.

Chapter 5 discusses major findings of this study. Implications of the findings were introduced. Suggestions for improving accounting graduates' qualities and job performance were also presented. Recommendations for further research were presented. Finally this study ends the chapter with conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the literature that are related to this topic under investigations namely knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics that are relative to their job performance. This chapter also consist of overview of accounting curriculum in Malaysia, employers' perception towards graduates, characteristics of accountants, job performance and the underlying theory.

2.1 Overview of Accounting Curriculum in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the development of accounting education at the early stage had been influenced by the British and Western Europe (Gul,1983). Evidence suggests that the need for someone responsible to provide financial information for the owners of British companies based in Malaysia during the colonial era in Malaysia. The earliest accountants who were British were brought to Malaysia at the time.

During the period of pre Second World War, a few local Malaysians obtained British professional qualifications and were trained as either Chartered Accountants or members of the Society of Incorporated Accountants. In 1930s, they then formed the Association of Chartered and Incorporated Accountants. Later in 1958, twenty local accountants incorporated the Malaysian Association of Certified Public Accountants (MACPA) which initially started the systematic education and training of accountants in Malaysia.

However, not all accountants became member of the MACPA, and as a result a group of them form a private accountancy body called the Malaysian Society of Accountants (MSA) in 1959 under the Companies Ordinance. Maybe due to the fact that the government was preoccupied with various physical developments and administrative programs for the newly independent nation, Malaysia did not have any legislation to regulate the accountancy profession during that period. Nevertheless, the government took the initiative to draft the Accountants Act, which was subsequently passed by Parliament in September 1967. As a result of the Accountants' Act 1967, the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) was formed with the following functions:

1. To determine the qualifications of persons for admission as members;
2. To provide for the training, education and examination by the Institute of any other body of persons practicing or intending to practice the profession accountancy;
3. To regulate the practice of the profession of accountancy in Malaysia;
4. To promote in any manner it thinks fit, the interest of the profession of accountancy in Malaysia;
5. To render pecuniary or other assistance to members or their dependents as it thinks fit with a view to protecting the welfare of members;
6. Generally to do such acts as it thinks fit to achieve any of the objectives.

MIA does not perform any examination functions and merely functioned as a registration body for almost 20 years after it was established. At that time MIA membership came from MACPA members and accountants trained in United Kingdom (Institute of

Chartered Accountants, England and Wales or Australia (Institute of Chartered Accountants or the Australian Society of Accountants). There were 469 and 507 members of MIA in 1969 and 1970.

MACPA and MIA did not provide any formal education and training and thus have less contribution to the increasing demand for accounting education. Recognising this problem and the need of an accountant who can adapt to the rapid economic development, Malaysian government began encouraging higher institution to provide formal education for accountants. The first institution taking the challenge was University Malaya, which produced Bachelor of Economics graduate, trained over three years specialised in Accounting. The proposal to introduce Bachelor of Accounting Degree was started by the Division of Accounting and was approved by University Malaya only in 1975. The effort to supply more trained accountants was done by other institutions in Malaysia i.e. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), MARA Institute of Technology (ITM) and other private colleges and institutions like Goon Institute, KDU College, Sunway College, TAR College and others.

Barjoyai (1995) stressed that in general, accounting education in Malaysia was dominated by 'colonial accounting'. It was evidenced by the choices of textbooks, teaching methods and the practise rules to licensing requirements. However, the developments in the accounting programmes in higher institutions reflected a different influence, whereby it is much more influenced by the North America such Canada and United States of America.

The changing in business environment and widespread of information technology is believe to give an impact to the development of accounting education (Rosiatimah & Intan, 2001). Therefore, the biggest challenge for accounting educators is to continuously hold high expectation to produce and supply capable and competence accounting graduates that meet the demand by the employer. They also discussed three key issues confronted by accounting education to meet the 21st century challenges; attracting high-qualified entrants' students to the accounting program, implementing changes in accounting curriculum, and improving instruction methods.

Rosiatimah and Intan (2001) state that university accounting programs that are technically oriented have been criticized for producing accounting graduates lacking of important technical skills and knowledge which are contributed by the breadth of education and depth of learning that graduates undergo in the training at the respective institutions that offer accounting programme.

Malaysian accounting education programs at universities have been said to be inadequate to meet the needs of expanding profession (Rosiatimah & Intan, 2001). They suggested that allocation of greater portion of curriculum contents needed to be given to information technology, management, human relations and communication. The reason for this is because broad-based knowledge is vital for career advancements up to the management hierarchy. Similarly, Rosiatimah and Intan (2001) also concluded that

higher educations in Malaysia do not seem to adequately prepare their graduates with the skills needed by employers.

In order to create 'well-rounded' accounting graduates, accounting faculty must be willing to restructure curricula to integrate various departmental disciplines (Rosiatimah & Intan, 2001). The team-taught approach can be used, where courses of accounting, marketing, finance, IT and management and others should not be taught as separate and distinct subjects. This approach has been implemented by some universities in US. The distinction between financial accounting, management accounting, taxation and auditing is no longer meaningful for current environment and these courses need to be better integrated and not taught in piece-meal approach (Rosiatimah & Intan, 2001). Rosiatimah and Intan (2001) also highlighted the importance of ethical dimension and suggested that inclusion of ethics into numerous courses is better than in one special course by itself.

Takiah, Syed Mohd Ghazali Wafa, and Selamat (2002) have identified the changing of business environment as a factor that gives pressure to the accounting profession. To respond to this, the Malaysian higher institutions should undertake curriculum development as an on-going process. This is important to ensure the universities produce accounting graduates that meet the requirement by the professional bodies and employer. The subject offerings and pedagogy have been integrated with the use of case studies, business games and ICT in order to produce accounting graduates that are competent and equipped with the necessary analytical, Behavioural and technical skills.

In addition, Takiah et al. (2002) give suggestion that universities and professional bodies should have a close collaboration, which can be done in several ways, such as:

1. Curriculum development incorporating inputs from professionals and academics to ensure its quality, relevance and practical;
2. Accreditation of qualification and entry for membership are evaluated upon the advice of academics;
3. Placements of accounting students in audit firms for industrial training as partial requirement for the accounting programme;
4. Placement of academics for three years to fulfil the MIA membership requirement; and
5. Closer partnership between MICPA and universities in the conduct of Module C (Advanced Taxation) and Module D (Advanced Financial Reporting) of the MICPA examination.

Final report for the Hala Tuju 1 was prepared in the year 2000 and approved by the National Higher Education Council (MPTN). The recommendation included in the report has been adopted by all Malaysian Public Universities to improve the Accounting programme. In general, the Hala Tuju 1 was accepted as basic guidelines for the minimum standards on developing the accounting programme in the country. Among the contribution are the adoptions of Hala Tuju 1 for the following purposes:

1. A guide in the curriculum development and syllabus design for accounting programme of IHLs in Malaysia.

2. A guide in the accreditation process of accounting programme offered by IHLs to be listed in Part 1 of the First Schedule of the Accountants Act 1967.
3. A benchmark in the syllabus design of the MIA Qualifying Examination and for the eligibility to sit for such examination.
4. A benchmark in the accreditation process carried out by the National Accreditation Board (LAN) for accounting programme offered by private universities. This accreditation process will ensure that accounting programme fulfil the stated minimum requirement for both public and private universities in the nation.
5. The recognition by the industry and public sector towards the graduates from local accounting programme for job recruitments in the country.

In 2006, Ministry of Education of Malaysia formed a committee known as *Jawatankuasa Hala Tuju Program Perakaunan* and established the Final Report of *Hala Tuju 2* of Accounting Programme at Public Universities (*Hala Tuju 2*). This committee was represented by 10 academicians from all Malaysian Public Universities. *Hala Tuju 2* focuses to alter the quality of accounting program in local higher institution to meet the global standards. A key objective of *Hala Tuju 2* is to produce graduates who can integrate and apply multidisciplinary knowledge to problem-solving once they start working, and as expected by industry. The rationales of *Hala Tuju 2* are to (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007):

1. Design an accounting programme structure that fulfils the requirement of international standards to increase the number of qualified, competent and recognised accountants;
2. Produce accountants who possess the knowledge and professional, intellectual, technical, analytical, inter-personal, communicative, leadership and entrepreneurial skills;
3. Prepare accountants with high level of competency and multi-skill in the fields appropriate with the current needs;
4. Attract foreign students to the local institutions of higher learning through an accounting education structure that is recognised internationally;
5. Facilitate the Mutual Recognition Agreement among accounting professional bodies; and
6. Ensure continuous recognitions by MIA through relevant and current curriculum.

Hala Tuju 2 suggests new structure for the accounting programme. The structure covers five main areas. These include accounting, finance and related knowledge, organisational and business knowledge, information technology, communication skills, industrial exposure and integrated case study, and non-accounting knowledge through elective courses.

Report of *Hala Tuju 2* is relevant and focused on the concerns identified by Rosiatimah and Intan (2001) for producing accounting graduates that are lacking with important non-

technical skills and knowledge. *Hala Tuju 2* is intended to assure the industry that after completion of the programme, the graduates will be able to possess the following:

1. Technical knowledge: accounting, finance and related areas, organisation, business and information technology (IT);
2. Professional skills: intellectual, technical, analytical, inter-personal, communication, leadership and entrepreneurial;
3. Organisational and business management;and
4. Ethical values and professional conduct.

These learning outcomes are similar to the areas stressed by Chen, Lee and Yeh (2008), Bennett et al. (2002), Bridges (2000) and Holmes (2001). These authors agreed that accounting graduates must be able to communicate effectively, be good team players, critical thinkers, problem solvers and, in addition, to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative people capable of initiating and responding to change. Hesketh (2000) and DiGabriele (2008) pointed similar expectation of accounting graduates to show strong ability in critical thinking, unstructured problem solving, investigative flexibility, analytical proficiency, and legal knowledge which are important skills required of accountants. Other researchers like Kerby and Romine (2009) stressed on the communication in course content, suggesting that such skill is pertinent to outcomes that are useful skills which employers expect, while Du-Babcock (2006) emphasised the teaching of business communication theory and models without effective application, is inadequate and will lead to students not capable of applying communication skills in the future.

2.2 Quality of Graduates from the Perspective of Employers

Evidence is clear that studying abroad do adds to students' portfolios; however, whether it impresses campus employers remains unclear. Organisations use specific criteria and processes to make valid employment decisions leading to increase performance and legal defensibility (Van Iddekinge & Ployhart, 2008). For example, a questionnaire study of Midwest personnel interviewers conducted by Cranmer (2006) revealed that communication skills, especially oral and nonverbal abilities, have a strong impact on hiring decisions. While candidates' knowledge can be evaluated, employers often lack complete information, such as candidates' future productivity levels etc, to make an effective informed hiring decisions (Cranmer, 2006).

Structured interviews are a widely used and often considered as a valid selection assessment that can be further strengthened (Klehe, Konig, Richter, Kleinmann, & Melchers, 2008). Interviews and its processes can inform our knowledge about employer decision making processes. For example, Cranmer (2006) examined corporate interviewers' decision making processes and effectiveness and found interpersonal skills, oral communication, and work experience to be key criterias when evaluating candidates' qualifications and hiring recommendations, with motivation being weighted more heavily than work experience for hiring recommendations. Additionally, effective interviewers used interpersonal and verbal communication skills as criteria for hiring decisions. For example, when examining interviewers from a large petroleum company, they found effectiveness, enthusiasm, and self-confidence to be influential factors in interviewers'

ratings of candidates' overall quality which impacted on their hiring decisions. Standards used to evaluate candidates during interview focuses on both positive and negative attributes.

A case study of six organisations conducted by Cranmer (2006) investigating how employers evaluate candidates, where their findings concerning work experience and skills, personality/interpersonal disposition, and education mirror more recent research (NACE 2008; NACE, 2009). A new selection criteria identified was job history, a component consisting of job hopping, reason for leaving previous positions, time unaccounted for, previous earnings, absenteeism, and tardiness. Employers appear to be looking for ways to easily disqualify candidates, and job history provides such an option.

In addition, to work experience, interpersonal skills, and job history, employers often use values as part of their decision making criteria. For example, Chen et al. (2008) support Cable and Judge (1997), revealed that the perceived person-organisation fit and alignment with an organisation's values positively impacted hiring recommendations. Chen et al. (2008) studied managers from Taiwanese companies and found that they preferred candidates who showed the greatest match between goals and values of the candidate and those of the organisation. The hiring decision making process was positively impacted by the perceived person-organisation fit.

Employers can always factor specific criteria into their hiring decisions. Pertaining to candidates who study abroad, and how such experience impacts employers' selection

decisions, an investigation by Trooboff, Vande, & Rayman (2007) examined employer attitudes toward such experiences. Accordingly, employers rated the significance of prospective employees to participate in international education experiences, the importance of various types of study abroad programs, and essential candidate skills/qualities. The researchers concluded that when considering the hiring of recent college graduates, employers value study abroad experiences, as many organisations are going global and international business is becoming growing revenue. As such, employers' judgments are shaped by various other factors such as the institutions attended, quality of the programmes, and others.

Several studies have involved employers in an attempt to identify stakeholder expectations of university graduates. Bennett et al. (2002) in a project for the UK Economic and Social Research Council, explored employers perspectives on the role of generic skills in the workplace and the different purposes and contexts for their development in the first few years of graduate employment. They found that employers and employees alike had varying understandings of the importance of generic skills in the workplace. Other findings (Bridges, 2000; Holmes, 2001) emphasise employers stated the need for graduates to be able to function in the workplace, be confident communicators, good team players, critical thinkers, and problem solvers and, in addition, to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative people capable of initiating and responding to change. Even though the desirable graduate attributes in these lists are similar to those of 20 years ago (Harvey, 1999), the lists are getting longer and more complex.

Across the world, studies have been conducted to gauge employer satisfaction with university accounting graduates (AC Nielsen Research Services, 2000; Albrecht & Sach, 2000; Bennett et al., 2002; Mazuki, Mohd Rizal, & Chong, 2007). In many disciplines, the skills agenda (Holmes, 2000) has been widely debated. Several researchers have indicated that technical skills are regarded as implicit in the skills base of a person entering an accounting career, but that it is a range of broader “personal characteristics” that facilitate career success and make accounting graduates more valuable to employers (Agyemang & Unerman, 1998). Employers worldwide are becoming increasingly concerned that undergraduate programs are not producing graduates with the necessary skills for their careers (de la Harpe et al., 2000).

In Australia, a survey of employer satisfaction with the learning of new university graduates reported that there were perceived skill deficiencies in important areas, such as problem solving, creativity and flair, and oral business communications (AC Nielsen Research Services, 2000). Furthermore, Lee and Blaszczynski (1999) report that although employers felt that accounting knowledge and the ability to use accounting information was an important skill, they expected accounting students to learn a multitude of skills including being able to communicate, work in a group environment, solve real-world problems, and use computer and Internet tools. Employers are looking for graduates who have work and life skills and are especially wanting graduates who have, among others, well-developed communication, team-work and problem-solving skills (ACNielsen, 1998, 2000). A major study of management accounting by Siegel and Sorenson (1999)

resulted in employers identifying communication (oral, written and presentation) skills, ability to work on a team, analytical skills, solid understanding of accounting, and understanding of how a business functions as being important for success.

Studies such as Borzi and Mills (2001) however, have discovered a significant level of communication apprehension in upper level accounting students suggesting that changes to the manner in which this skill in particular is developed within the curriculum need to be addressed.

A survey of employers' expectations of accounting graduates derived from classified job advertisements in the US in 1993 (Johnson & Johnson, 1995) identified that after professional accounting qualifications (57%), accounting positions called for communication skills (15%), organisation skills (7%) and interpersonal skills (5%). However, despite this, Howieson (2003) suggests that practitioners/employers have traditionally encouraged an entrenched technical approach which provides them with graduates who can instantly be turned to profitable activities. He further suggests that both universities and practitioners must change their perspective away from the short-term and technical, towards the long-term and personal skills such as adaptability.

The challenge of delivering graduates with a more extensive skill set is highlighted in a European study (Hassall, Joyce, Montanto & Anes 2005). Their research points to similar employer demands for non-technical skills (beyond the necessary technical accounting skills), but was reported that the employers were unsympathetic with claims from

universities that they had limited capacity to deliver on these greater demands. Nevertheless, Hesketh (2000) reports that while the social and economic world has been transformed in recent years, the demands made of graduates by employers still largely revolve around traditional concerns of the ability to learn new material and to apply it to workplace scenarios. DiGabriele (2008) in a US study found that both academics and practitioners agree that critical thinking, unstructured problem solving, investigative flexibility, analytical proficiency, and legal knowledge are important skills for accountants.

Academics' and practitioners' perceived importance of knowledge and skill for management of technology graduate program in the US suggested that strategic role of technology in business, implementation of new technology, transfer of technology within organisation, new product development, and business strategy and competition are fundamental (Mallick & Chaudhury, 2000). The important skills required are the knowledge on integration of technology and business strategy, working across functional boundaries, effective written communication skills, achieving implementation and identification of new technological opportunity. The study has since enhanced the curriculum development for technology management education.

A later study by Nambisan and Wilemon (2003) focused on a global study of graduate management of technology programs in 53 countries. The study presented the industrial sector's role of supporting curriculum development. The factors included research trends, curriculum development, staffing, program implementation and program emphases.

Majority of the students came with sciences and engineering backgrounds and attended the course on a part-time or full-time basis. The course consisted subjects on technology innovation, research and development with information technology management. The study included information technology, as it might affect the sustainable competitive advantage of organisation and might stimulate the need of technology managers in industrial sector. The important issue is the implication of the dominant and the deficiency of management of technology to the academia, industrial sectors and the individuals who show great interests in the program.

Intarakumnerd, Chairatana and Tangchitpiboon (2002) studied the demand of technology training programs in Thailand. The study indicated the importance of technology to eco-industrial development, organisation and national's competitive advantage. Moreover, information on technology training programs benefits the future social need for technology and innovation management. The study concluded with an implication on the necessity to develop a single discipline of technology management program for graduates, in order to support the rapid change of economic, social and education structure. Other studies indicated a mismatch between the delivery of management of technology programs by academia and the actual skill and knowledge required by practitioners or the industry (Mallick & Chaudhury, 2000; Nambisan & Wilemon, 2003).

Regarding the other primary communication skill and oral communication, studies found that oral communication was one of the top three competencies needed to succeed in a managerial position (Bolt-Lee & Foster, 2003). Bolt-Lee & Foster (2003) also demonstrated the unsatisfactory oral communication skills of many accounting graduates.

Thus, it appears that preparing students' oral communication skills for the managerial workplace has not been highly successful effective and this must be attended to improve the graduates oral abilities and communication skills.

In specialised fields of management, similar phenomenon appears as well. The accounting profession has taken a special interest in communication skills as accounting evolves from bookkeeping, number-crunching activity to an analysis, reporting, and advising profession (Siegel, 2000). In an extensive study of practitioners, Bolt-Lee and Foster (2003) found that communication skills are one of the key areas that require major improvement within the accounting profession.

Other specialties demonstrating concern for communication skills deficiencies are information systems and public relations. In a study of information systems employers, Cappel (2002) found a significant gap between expected and actual communication skills. In fact, information systems employers rated the communication skills gap as much greater than the technical skills gap. In public relations, which focused on communications, Wise (2005) noted that public relations professionals overwhelmingly described the writing of entry-level employees as "bad" or "poor," and the most positive comments in his study included "very uneven," "average," and "fair." This is not a ringing endorsement of progress in teaching business communications skills.

Thus, research and debate continue on what communication skills should be emphasised and how they should be taught (Pittenger, Miller & Mott, 2004; Russ, 2009; Blasczynski, Haras, & Katz, 2010). Numerous studies (Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum, 1999; Ulinski and O'Callaghan, 2002; Seshadri and Theye, 2000) suggest that it is important for the

business educators to better understand and teach communication skills. Tanyel et al. (1999) found significant differences between prospective employers' and faculty members' attitudes regarding the importance of expected communication skills among recent graduates. Ulinski and O'Callaghan (2002) found that MBA students and employers generally disagree on the order of importance of communication skills. Seshadri and Theye (2000) found that professionals judge writing on different criteria than do faculty. The NCW (2004) report stated that employers feel that the style taught in academics is often inappropriate for business writing. So, between academia and practitioners, there are disagreements pertaining to what these graduates need for the business communication skills.

There are many possible explanations for these disagreements. Academicians may emphasise on theories and models while practitioners' emphasise on skills and abilities that produce practical outcomes. In addressing this gap, several studies have suggested that there is a lack of focus in business communication curriculum on skills that relate to practical outcomes. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) concluded that the focus should be on the practical use of skills, not theoretical understanding or abstract knowledge. Pittenger, Miller and Mott (2004) proposed teaching communications with an emphasis on real-world standards and operational skills outcomes.

Business communication skill education instructional methods are widely discussed. Kerby and Romine (2009) stressed on the communication in course content, suggesting outcomes that are useful skills that employers want. Du-Babcock (2006) stated that teaching business communication theory and models without associating application materials is inadequate and will lead to students not being capable of applying

communication skills in the future. As early as 1999, Murranka and Lynch (1999) demonstrated that a competency-based communication course focused on skills applications could be successful. Laster and Russ (2010) found pedagogical differences and similarities in how instructors from business and communication disciplines teach the introductory business communication course. By surveying 444 instructors teaching this course at colleges and universities across the US, they found both complimentary and contradictory instructional approaches and called for more cross-disciplinary uniformity in contemporary business communication education.

Cyphert, Worley, and Dyrud (2002) looked at the integration of communication across the master of business administration (MBA) curriculum at the University of Northern Iowa. They found that although students felt that communication-focused courses were worthwhile, the University still sought to better integrate communication skills across the MBA curriculum. The authors noted that one-unit course do not offer sufficient opportunity for students to become familiar with the processes and protocols of business communication, particularly for those with no professional experience in the US.

Scholars and practitioners alike have long argued that professional effectiveness is concomitantly linked to communication competence. Consequently, business school faculty members have come to realise that they must equip students with the communication skills that match with the employers expectations if their programs are to succeed. A number of audits published over 30 years have examined the evolutionary pedagogical and programmatic developments of the undergraduate business communications course (Russ, 2009). These audits serve as reliable barometers, yielding valuable information for both internal and external stakeholders and allowing them to

evaluate the health of the introductory course, track pedagogical and administrative trends, benchmark best practices, and identify pedagogical opportunities. Although periodic audits of the business communication course are necessary, the last one was conducted a decade ago, warranting a contemporary audit.

Yu (2010) echoed these beliefs and stated the idea of learning from industry is not readily embraced; looking at industry to design assessment may thus be interpreted by some faculty as a degenerative slide into a vocational paradigm that replaces education with training. Yu further concluded that if business faculty want to help students succeed in workplace communication, they must understand how employees and their performance are assessed and deemed successful in those institutions.

With such a difficult job market, students need to make themselves as viable as possible. Employers seek certain skills, abilities, and experiences in prospective employees. Before candidates get a second consideration, they often have to meet the academic standards set by employers. Grade point average (GPA) is a key screening tool for interviews, and this criterion has been used consistently throughout the last several years (NACE, 2008). Organisations want students with strong academic skills, as demonstrated by the 3.0 screening cut-off (NACE, 2008). In addition to GPA, other factors influence employers' decisions for selecting qualified candidates. These include discipline qualification, leadership experience, co-curricular involvement, college/university, and volunteer experience (NACE, 2008). Excluding institution attended, students have the opportunity to be in control of their appeal to employers by striving for high grades, applying to positions related to their major, and participating in a variety of activities, such as leadership, co-curricular, and volunteer.

Students can make themselves marketable to employers by gaining additional work experience. This criterion is essential, and most employers factor it into their hiring decisions (NACE, 2008). There are a variety types of work experience such as part-time employment or internships that can be leverage and maybe beneficial for employment. Students can have on-campus positions in various departments; they can work off-campus in areas, such as food service or retail environments; or students can be intentional about their experience and work in fields related to their majors or career aspirations. For example, a student interested in politics can work for a local campaign office. Being intentional about one's work experience is beneficial because employers prefer candidates with such experience (NACE, 2008).

In addition to experience, employers seek candidates with a variety of attributes. Through a national survey, employers indicated the following skills and qualities as "very important": strong work ethic, teamwork skills, initiative, analytical skills, computer skills, flexibility/adaptability, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, technical skills, detailed orientation, organisational skills, and self-confidence (NACE, 2008). Mirroring the top qualities indicated, data from another poll of employers underscored professionalism/work ethic, verbal and written communication, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/problem solving as necessary for success in the workplace (Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, & Society for Human Resource Management, 2006).

In addition, employers clearly value leadership skills, tactfulness, friendly/outgoing personality, creativity, strategic planning skills, entrepreneurial skills/risk-taking, and sense of humour (NACE, 2008). Such qualities sought by employers can be fine-tuned

through a variety of activities; and it would behove students to make the most of their educational endeavours through participation in these experiences.

While there are a number of attributes that employers seek in candidates, college graduates often are ill-prepared to meet employers' needs. For instance, although, communication skills top those employers request, they are the number one skill set candidates' seem to lack (NACE, 2008; Conference Board et al., 2006). In addition, employers perceive recent college graduates to fall short on leadership skills resulting in a situation that is potentially problematic (Conference Board et al., 2006). After all, the preparedness and skill levels of its workforce are critical factors in the ability of the United States to stay competitive in the 21st century (Conference Board et al., 2006), and students need to gain the necessary experience to become marketable in today's challenging economy, especially in face of both national and global competition. Therefore, in view of difficult economic times, the challenge for students to maximise their skill set is paramount, especially those preparing them for a global marketplace.

2.3 Job Performance

Job performance is the most important measurement on organisation success because it is always been reported as a significant indicator of organisational performance (Borman, 2004a). Jex and Britt (2008) and Motowidlo (2003) expressed that job performance is oftentimes assessed in terms of financial figures and through the combination of expected Behaviour and related aspects. Additionally, Jex and Britt (2008) categorized job performance into 'will do' and 'can do'. The former refers to the knowledge, skills,

abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) that an individual has and must have in performing a certain job. 'Can do' reflects the motivation level of an employee in performing his or her work. Jeck & Britt (2008) raised that employees should be provided with the knowledge, skills and abilities because the competence employee will be able to face the challenge in work environment and explore the existing opportunities. He also stressed that job performance is based on self-abilities, knowledge and internal motivation of the employees.

William (2002) refers job performance as work outcomes and job relevant Behaviours. Work outcomes deal with task performance, such as quality and quantity of work done, while job relevant Behaviour refers to the Behavioural aspects useful in achieving task performance. Job relevant Behaviours provide support in performing task-related matters. Most importantly, job performance measure, which may be based on an absolute value or a relative judgment, can be generalised to the overall organisational performance because it reflects the organisational performance (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2007; Jeck & Britt, 2008; Sacket, Berry, Wiemenn & Laczko, 2006; Wall, Michie, Petterson, Wood, Sheehan, Clegg & West, 2004). Absolute value of performance is based on the objective results, such as total points from sales or productivity, while relative judgments are performance evaluation made based on the Behavioural related aspects that are very subjective in nature (Gomez-Mejia, 2007).

Borman (2004a) raised the issues that employees' Behaviour at work constitutes job performance. Job performance is limited to the core task activities that were based solely job analysis (Jex & Britt, 2008). The construct, has however, expanded into Behavioural aspects related directly to the core tasks and other Behaviours that support the core task

performance. Job performance should be measured in terms of task performance and contextual performance in order to fully grasp a holistic concept of the latent construct. Contextual performance is Behaviour that helps support incumbents in performing their task performance and this Behaviour is important to ensure organisational effectiveness in the long run (Jex & Britt, 2008).

2.3.1 Task Performance

Task performance is defined as role-prescribed Behaviours, core-tasks, or tasks that involve the maintenance of the technical core of the organisation (Luo, Shi, Li & Miao, 2008). Motowidlo (2003) stressed that most scholars have given limited attention to the concept of task performance. Others (Gomez-Mejia et al. (2007) suggest that task performance can be distinguished in the quality of work done, the quantity of work performed and interpersonal effectiveness. According to Motowidlo (2003), task performance is the total expected value of an individual's Behaviour over a standard period of time of production of goods and service and relates to the proficiency in performing the job.

Similar to task performance, contextual performance has been coined as extra-role Behaviour (Becker & Kermen, 2006), pro-social organisational Behaviour, organisational spontaneity (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Pain & Bachrach, 2000) as well as organisational citizenship Behaviour (Gwynne, 2002). LePine, Hanson, Borman and Motowildo (2000) also conceptualised contextual performance as the Behaviours that support the core task performance in enhancing organisational effectiveness.

Both aspect of performance are crucial to achieve organisational objectives because task performance is concerned with Behaviours that are required to complete job tasks while contextual performance is needed to safeguard and upgrade the organisational, social and psychological environment in the organisation (LePine et al., 2000; Jex & Britt, 2008). This means that contextual performance complements task performance in helping an organisation to achieve its goals (Jahagir, Akbar & Haq, 2004; Lou et al., 2008; Spitzmuller, Van Dyne & Ilies, 2008).

2.3.2 Organisation Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

‘Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)’ was first introduced by Bateman and Organ (1983) in defining employee’s beneficial Behaviour that was not prescribed but occurred freely to help others achieve or complete their task. OCB is also defined as employees’ activities that exceed formal job requirement and contribute to the effective functioning of the organisation (Finkelstein, 2006). Jahangir et al. (2004) referred OCB as a set of discretionary workplace Behaviours that exceed one’s basic job requirements. Other scholar like Giap, Hackermeier, Jiao, Wagdarikar (2005) defined OCB as helpful to other with little or no interest rewarded for one’s efforts. Thus, OCB is functional, extra-role, pro-social organizational Behaviours directed at individual or a group in the organisation. These attributes are helping Behaviours not formally prescribed by the organisation and for which there are no direct rewards or punishments. OCB is also perceived as work related activities performed by employees to increase organisational effectiveness but beyond the scope of his/her job description.

Borman (2004b) delineated four reasons why OCB will continuously be scrutinised in the future. Employees are expected to exhibit OCB to a certain degree due to increased global competition in the current market, increased teamwork and inter-dependability among employees, more merging and downsizing activities that requires employees to adapt to the new work environment and the expansion of service industry that mainly focuses on customer service and client satisfaction. This calls for the employees to engage in OCB to ensure organisational sustainability and effectiveness (Borman, 2004a). In other words, the job performance domain has been expanded by incorporating OCB in order to meet today's external and internal environment requirements that are constantly changing and becoming more challenging.

To a certain extent, the distinction between task performance and contextual performance is evident because both dimensions have different predictors. It is theorised that task performance is determined by procedural knowledge and declarative knowledge, ability, and job experience; while contextual performance is closely associated with an individual's personality type (Jex & Britt, 2008). However, Vey and Campbell (2004) asserted that in measuring job performance, it is important to integrate items on the task performance and contextual performance, or specifically OCB. Task performance and contextual performance are strongly related and it is difficult to differentiate as Behavioural aspects of job performance as they are subjective.

Vey and Campbell (2004) and Fisher and Hartel (2004) strongly suggested that OCB items should be included in job performance measures as some of the items may contains task performance items. In meta-analysis by Podsakoff et al. (2000), it was noted that task performance and OCB accounted for by merely 9.3 percent and 12 percent of the

variance respectively in performance evaluations. Johnson (2001) also found that task and contextual performance contributed substantially in predicting overall job performance ratings. Both dimensions contribute unique variance to the job performance domain as supervisors evaluate and combine task and contextual items in appraising subordinates' overall performance. Locke and Latham (1990) in Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (2005) have developed a comprehensive framework, linking goals to performance. The model is as shown below:

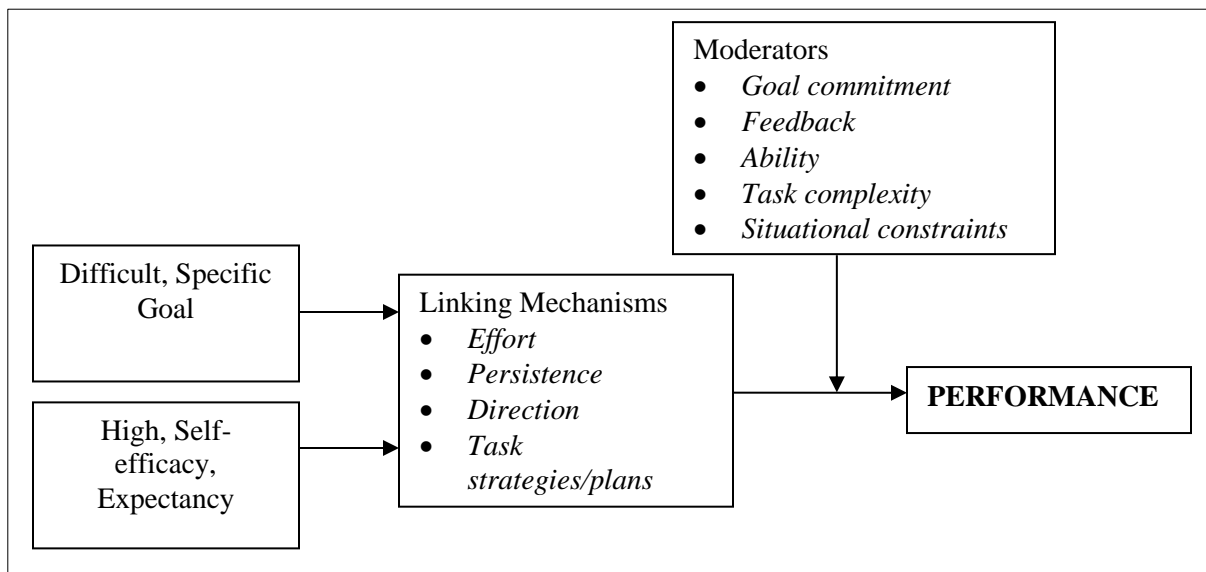


Figure 2.1
Essential of the Locke and Latham Goal-setting Framework
 Source: Schermerhorn et al., 2005

Schermerhorn et al. (2005) stated that performance appraisal is a process of systematically evaluating performance and providing feedback on which performance adjustment can be made. If the preferred levels of performance exceed actual levels, a performance variance requiring special attention exists. From an evaluation perspective, performance appraisal is an input to decision that allocates rewards and otherwise administers the organisation's personnel functions. From a counselling perspectives,

performance facilitates implementing decisions relating to planning and gaining commitment to the training and personal development of subordinates.

2.4 Qualities of Accounting Graduates

2.4.1 Knowledge

Many researchers have carried out several studies on this area. Porter and McKibbin (1988) found that most accounting programs follow a pedagogical model developed decades ago where students are taught business concepts through functional areas such as, accounting, management, marketing, finance, and others. It is said that these students are therefore inadequately prepared for a cross-functional world. They contend that accounting graduates, while are technically prepared, are not equipped to meet the challenges of the accounting profession. They suggest that accounting education must be based on a strong interdisciplinary foundation.

Albrecht and Sack (2000) undertook a study on this subject sponsored by the American Accounting Association (AAA), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA), and the Big 5 CPA firms. They suggest that three major changes in business environment (technology, globalisation, and investor concentration) necessitate a more broadly educated accounting student. They argue that current accounting curricula do not expose students to a broad business education nor do they teach global perspectives. They further suggest that accounting education should be integrated and students should only be taught relevant things.

Many researchers have studied graduates' perceptions toward curriculum and the importance of skills. These studies conclude that as an important stakeholder in accounting programme, graduates should provide feedback to their universities on the relevance of their accounting program. Gabbin (2002) suggest that alumni CPAs and accounting educators should have a reciprocal relationship. This is important because accounting practitioners know better than anyone else what the profession has to offer students, and expert insight about the changing nature of the profession and employer needs.

Gabbin further suggest that accounting educators should get regular and systematic feedback from the alumni about the changing business environment and their assessment of an accounting program's strengths and weaknesses. This feedback can help program improvement. Smith and Demichiell (1996) emphasised the importance of surveys of stakeholders in designing new curriculum. According to them, this will help institutions to continuously improve their curriculum.

The AAA assessment task force documented the importance of employer/alumni feedback on the curriculum in 1999. The findings revealed that 10 out of the 13 programs surveyed acknowledge the importance of alumni or employer feedback in developing curriculum changes and assessing the success of innovations. Of the 13 programs, eight used both employers and alumni input to support curriculum changes. This strongly supports the notion that before any changes are made to the existing curriculum, feedback

from the employers, practicing accountants and the alumni is important. Feedback from these groups will also assist in improving the quality of the programs.

Mathews (2004) suggests that students are not graduating with broad, higher learning outcomes which should be achieved at university and that a more interdisciplinary curriculum is required. Too often, university accounting programs are managed as simply a series of distinct discipline-based areas. This has been reiterated by students themselves who feel that knowledge essential to their career in accounting are not being sufficiently emphasised in undergraduate accounting programs (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2007). In general, the professionally sponsored educational change literature has recommended the broadening of the accounting curriculum to include those competencies as suggested by Albrecht and Sack (2000).

Elliott and Jacobson (2002) suggest that accountants need education in complementary bodies of knowledge, such as organisational Behaviour, issues in strategic management, measurement and analytical skills; while Mathews (2004) suggests an interdisciplinary curriculum at university. Others argue that university educators of future professional accountants should be committed to develop the relevant attributes identified as desirable for the profession (Education Change Commission, 1990; IFAC, 2006). Howieson (2003) sees the focus of future accounting professional being the management of knowledge and adapting the education of accounting professionals to capitalise on that.

2.4.2 Skills

There have been several studies undertaken across industries that reflect the views of employers. Lloyd (2008) suggested that in the UK current skills policy is centred on the need to drive up qualification obtainment and make the system more employer-led. This study also found that social skills are generally found to be of importance and are often claimed to be lacking in the labour market (LSC 2006). However, social skills are very difficult to define (Grugulis, 2007) and are often difficult to meet these through qualifications.

Kryder (1997) identified five core skills vital for accounting and business graduates. They include written and oral business communication, team work, computer competency, and multicultural communication. Messmer (1997) also stressed the importance of communication skills, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Thornburg (1997) has suggested a similar set of skills for success: written and oral communication, computer knowledge, human relations, problem solving, leadership and delegation.

Researchers such as Hodges and Burchell (2003) suggest that accounting graduates need to possess a combination of cognitive skills (technical knowledge, expertise and abilities) and personal or Behavioural characteristics (principles, attitudes, values and motives) which are a function of individual personality. In recent years, it was suggested that a skill such as emotional intelligence (the ability to recognize, use and manage emotions) is critical for engaging with the world and that emotions are central in all rational decision making processes (McPhail, 2004). Others have suggested that emotional intelligence has

become a skill that may allow accountants to perform better in a variety of areas such as leadership, client relations, and even decision making (Bay & McKeage, 2006). Akers and Porter (2003, p.65) further advocate that:

“The AICPA and the Institute of Management Accountants recognize that emotional intelligence skills are critical for the success of the accounting profession.”

Demands from employers that new recruits should be ‘job ready’ are common. However, this is difficult given that most jobs require some element of organisational and workplace specific skills (Gleeson & Keep, 2004). Further Grugulis, Warhurst, and Keep (2004) argue that by classifying such attitudes and Behaviour as “motivation” as a skill, employers have been able to shift responsibility for the creation or reinforcement of some of these attitudes and traits away from their role as managers and motivators of their employees and onto the education system.

Gabric and McFadden (2000) investigate students’ perceptions of the expected marketable skill foundation and found that students agree in developing ‘personal transferable skills’. The skills such as communication and time management which can be used in a “wide variety of career-related situations” is not only important for making them more employable but is also a “fundamental part” of achieving “a good education” (Haigh & Kilmartin, 1999). As far as future career prospects were concerned, students rated teamwork and public presentation skills as the most important learning outcomes of the course and emphasised the development of skills to equip graduates for learning, work and life. This view is supported by Candy, Crebert, and O’Leary (1994) and developed further by Jones and Sin (2003), who emphasise that students must be

prepared to be lifelong learners with a focus on developing attributes and skills over a lifetime of professional, social and cultural experience. The focus change, and renew skills and knowledge throughout life (Crebbin, 1997). Although universities have responded to the challenge of the 'skills agenda' in a variety of ways, Athiyaman (2001) finds that students felt that universities were still not delivering in terms of the development of those skills and attributes they considered important to their careers.

Many researchers have recommended abandoning a wholly procedural (technical) approach to financial accounting (Bonk & Smith, 1998; Albrecht & Sack, 2000; Herring & Williams, 2000). Hunton (2002) argues that many traditional accounting tasks can be reliably automated, supporting claims that an accountant's worth is now increasingly reflected in higher-order skills, such as critical-thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills. In contrast, some feel that it is unrealistic for universities to attempt to guarantee that graduates will possess the necessary generic skills to meet the demands of employers especially across a range of disciplines (Cranmer, 2006). However, Albrecht and Sack (2000, p. 55) stress the importance of skill development during accounting programmes and state that:

“Students forget what they memorize. Content knowledge becomes dated and is often not transferable across different types of jobs. On the other hand critical skills rarely become obsolete and are usually transferable across assignments and careers.”

New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) (2003) has produced Employer Survey Spring 2003. The report stated type of skills needed by the employees as evaluated by 3,617 organisations. The results of their study is shown in Figure 2.1. It was found that

important skills that graduates need to have were (1) professional ethics, (2) problem solving, (3) teamwork, (4) oral communication, and followed by (5) computer.

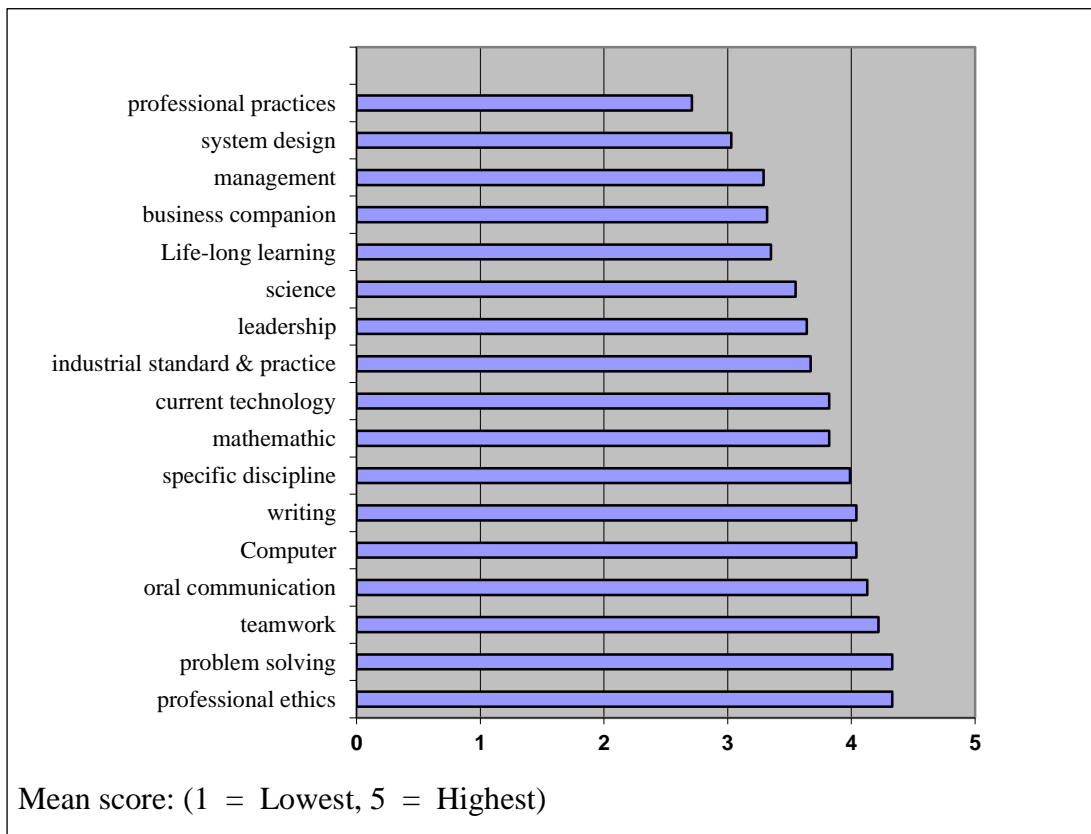


Figure 2.2
Employers Rating of the Importance of Knowledge and Skills
 Source: NJIT (2003)

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) also produce the Employers Satisfaction Report in 2000. In the report (NAIT, 2000), employers from various industries evaluate their perception on skills, knowledge and abilities of their employees. The result shows that majority of the employers were satisfied with the working knowledge and technological skills. It is followed by the ability to identify and solve the problem and communication skills. This finding is similiar to Hesketh (2003). Hesketh (2003) agreed that the stated knowledge, skills and abilities are important to employers satisfaction.

Using Dephi Technique, Ismail and De Souza (2002) identified 10 skills needed by business management graduates, from the perspectives of 140 managers in Malaysia. The results show that most important skills include communication, presentation, analytical and human affairs.

Ulinski and O'Collaghan (2002) compared the students and employers perception towards the importance of 13 oral communication skills as identified in study by Maes, Weldy dan Icenogle (1997). 73 MBA graduates were selected as the respondent in the study. The results show that listening and speaking skills are the most important skills perceived by native-English-speaking MBA graduates and employers. This is also found to differ from the ability to listen and followed clients' orders, giving order and interview, when the respondents perceived that these skills are less important.

2.4.3 Abilities

Competitive pressures, technology and global environment have led to changed expectations in terms of the abilities that new accounting graduates should demonstrate from the outset. Different stakeholders have different expectations. Researchers suggest that accounting graduates need to possess a combination of cognitive abilities and personal or Behavioural characteristics (principles, attitudes, values and motives) which are a function of individual personality (Hassall, et al. (2005). In recent years, researchers have suggested that an ability such as emotional intelligence (the ability to recognize, use and manage emotions) is critical for engaging with the world and that emotions are

central to all rational decision making processes (McPhail, 2004). Others have suggested that emotional intelligence has become an ability that may allow accountants to perform better in a variety of areas such as leadership, client relations, and even decision making (Bay & McKeage, 2006).

Bridges (2000) and Holmes (2001) emphasise employers' needs for graduates to be able to function in the workplace, be confident communicators, good team players, critical thinkers, problem solvers and, in addition, to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative people capable of initiating and responding to change (Harvey, 1999). Even though the desirable graduate attributes in these lists are similar to those of 20 years ago (Harvey, 1999), the lists are getting longer and more complex.

Researchers began to question what are the important specialised abilities of accountants (Cohen, Crain, & Sanders, 1996; Harris & Brown, 2000, Messmer 2004, Ramaswamy, 2005), and their experience levels (Grippio & Ibex, 2003). DeGabriele (2008) extended these studies by surveying accounting academics, forensic accounting practitioners and users of forensic accounting services to further define the relevant abilities and characteristic of accountants. DeGabriele (2008) identified nine competencies for three major stakeholder groups and had the participants rate their agreement/disagreement with the importance of those competencies. DeGabriele (2008) was able to group the competencies into those related to knowledge and ability and those related to performance. DeGabriele (2008) results suggest that the three major stakeholder groups differ on all of the knowledge and ability items but agree on all of the performance items.

His results also suggest that academics and practitioners have more agreement over the importance of accountant skills.

Blanchard and Thacker (1999) argued that ability can hardly be distinguished from knowledge and skill. Abilities, which originates from hereditary and experience, can be developed over time. Similarly, Henderson (2000) described ability as a general trait or quality acquired by an individual, which is useful in performing a range of tasks. Unlike skills, ability is less likely to change over time because it is applicable across various tasks of different jobs. Abilities can be categorized into cognitive abilities, psychomotor abilities, physical abilities, and sensory abilities (Henderson, 2000).

2.4.4 Other Characteristics

Other characteristics refer to all other aspects besides knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are crucial to the job. It is crucial for employees to have other characteristics before entering employment. For instance, employers have to make sure that the selected employees possess values that are consistent with the organisational culture and values (Heneman & Judge, 2003). The British Retail Consortium (BRC) defines the characteristics that are considered by employers to be important to successful performance as listed below:

1. Self-confidence and personal strength (assertiveness, decisiveness, flexibility, judgment, initiative, stress tolerance);
2. Leadership and teamwork;
3. Planning and organisation;

4. Human relations and influencing.

Harvey et al. (1997) conducted research which focused mainly on large organisations, but also encompassed SMEs to establish the values placed on skills in the world of work and concluded that:

“There are large numbers of graduates looking for jobs and employers, as we have seen, no longer recruit simply on the basis of degree status. A degree might be necessary or desirable but employers are looking for a range of other characteristics when employing and retaining graduates”.

Similarly, Williams and Owen (1997) state that within SMEs recruiting graduates, the most common perceived graduate characteristics are an ability to learn, intelligence, ideas and imagination. They also found that Evidence from Quality in Higher Education (QHE), shows that employers generally express little interest in cognitive skills; instead they seek someone who can make an “early impression” on the organisation.

2.5 Underlying Theory

2.5.1 Competency Model

Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) stated that a competency model describes the particular combination of knowledge, skills, and characteristics needed to effectively perform a role in an organisation and is used as a human resource tool for selection, training and development, appraisal, and succession planning. Dubois et al. (2004) defined a competency model as a written description of the competencies required for fully successful or exemplary performance in a job category, work team, department, division, or organisation. Boyatzis (1982) and Ley (2006) defined competencies as cognitive (e.g.

knowledge and skills), affective (e.g. attitudes and values), Behavioural and motivational (e.g. motivation) characteristics and dispositions of a person which enables him or her to perform well in a specific situations (Ley, 2006; Boyatzis, 1982).

Competency models typically include a list of competencies and Behavioural indicators that make the competency come alive in terms of what it looks like in the context of an organisation (Dubois & Rothwell, 2000; Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency models are used to align individual capabilities and human resource functions with organisational strategy.

2.5.2 Resource-Based Theory

Resource-based theory suggests that firm resources and capabilities influence the growth and performance of the firm (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). The firm is defined as a set of productive resources and administrative organisation (Penrose, 1959). Distinctive resources and their immobility across firms make firm heterogeneity, resulting in performance heterogeneity.

The primary question of resource-based theory when this theory is first introduced is that what characteristics of resources can generate sustained competitive advantages. Specifically, the question is why firms may have different performances even within the same industry. Four indicators of firm resources to generate sustained competitive advantage are suggested by Barney (1991).

1. *Valuable resources* – Firm resources can be a source of competitive advantage when they are valuable. Resources are valuable when they enable a firm to conceive or implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. For example, when resources can have the effect of reducing a firm's costs or increasing its revenues, the resources can be considered as valuable resources.
2. *Rare resources* – Firm resources possessed by large numbers of competing or potentially competing firms cannot be source of competitive advantage. A firm may get a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value-creating strategy not simultaneously implemented by large numbers of other firms.
3. *Inimitable resources* – Valuable and rare resources can be sources of sustained competitive advantage. Various factors, such as a firm's unique history, causal ambiguity, and interconnectedness among resources, may increase inimitability of resources.
4. *Non-substitutable resources* – Firm resources that do not have strategically equivalent resources are non-substitutable resources. If other firms have strategically equivalent resources, the firms can implement the same strategies in different ways using different resources. A firm may get sustained competitive advantage when other firms may not obtain the same competitive advantage using different resources.

Human capital demand analysis has the role to identify and predict the quality and quantity of the human resources needed for the organisation, while the analysis of human capital supply identify the existing resources and predict their abilities in the future. With these analyses, the characteristic of future employees such as knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) can be developed and controlled to suit the

organisational needs. Hence, the employees will be an advantage to the organisations and improve the performance as recommended by the resource-based theory.

2.6 Summary of Literatures

Summary of all the literature discussed in this study is illustrated in Table 2.1 to Table 2.4 below:

Table 2.1

Summary of the Literature - Overview of Accounting Education in Malaysia

Author	Samples	Country	Findings
Rosiatimah & Intan (2001)	Accounting graduates	Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting high-qualified entrants students to the accounting program. • Implementing changes in accounting curriculum. • Improving instruction methods. • Allocation of greater portion of curriculum contents needed to be given to information technology, management, human relations and communication. • Higher education in Malaysia does not adequately prepare their graduates with the skills needed by employers.
Takiah et al. (2002)	Accounting graduates	Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing of business environment as a factor that gives pressure to the accounting profession. • Malaysian higher institutions should undertake curriculum development as an on-going process. • Curriculum development incorporates inputs from the professionals and academics to ensure its quality, relevance and practicality. • Accreditation of qualification and entry for membership are evaluated upon advice of the academics. • Placements of accounting students in audit firms for industrial training as the partial requirement of the accounting programme. • Placement of academics for three years to fulfil the MIA membership requirement. • Closer partnership between MICPA and universities in the conduct of Module C (Advanced Taxation) and Module D (Advanced Financial Reporting) of the MICPA examination.

Table 2.2

Summary of the Literature- Qualities of the Graduates by the Perspective of Employers

	Samples	Country	Findings
Borzi and Mills (2001)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant level of communication apprehension in upper level accounting students suggesting that changes to the manner in which this skill in particular is developed within the curriculum need to be addressed.
Bennett et al. (2002)	Employers and employees	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers and employees alike had varying understandings of the importance of generic skills in the workplace.
Howieson (2003)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners/employers encouraged an entrenched technical approach which provides them with graduates who can instantly be turned to profitable activities. • Universities and practitioners must change their perspective away from the short-term and technical, towards the long-term and personal skills such as adaptability.
Hassall et al. (2005)	Employers	Spain and UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers were unsympathetic with claims from universities that they had limited capacity to deliver on these greater demands.
Cranmer (2006)	Graduates	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers seek to determine hiring criteria, or the qualifications wanted in new employees during selection interviews. • These activities provide valuable information about candidates' goals, job interests, experience, and decision-making ability. • Interpersonal skills, oral communication, and work experience to be key criteria when evaluating candidates' qualifications and hiring recommendations, with motivation being weighted more heavily than work experience for hiring recommendations.

Table 2.2 (Continued)

	Samples	Country	Findings
Trooboff et al. (2007)	Employers	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer's value study abroad experiences and this is linked with the firm's internationally generated revenue. • Employers' judgments are shaped by additional factors, such as the quality of the study abroad exposure or characteristics of the recruiter, is also unknown, especially in the context of other traditional factors.
Chen et al. (2008)	Employers	Taiwan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taiwanese companies preferred candidates who showed the greatest match between goals and values of the candidate and those of the organisation. • The hiring decision making process was positively impacted by the perceived person-organisation fit.
DiGabriele (2008)	Academic and practitioners	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics and practitioners agree that critical thinking, unstructured problem solving, investigative flexibility, analytical proficiency, and legal knowledge are important skills for forensic accountants.
NACE (2008)	Employers and employees	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers prefer candidates with related experience. • College graduates to fall short on leadership skills.
Van Iddekinge & Ployhart (2008)	Employees	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations use specific criteria and processes to make valid employment decisions leading to increased performance and legal defensibility.
Kerby and Romine (2009)	Accounting graduates	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressed on the communication in course content, suggesting outcomes that are useful skills that employers want.

Table 2.3

Summary of the Literature - Job Performance

Author	Findings
William (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job performance is work outcomes and job relevant Behaviours. • Job performance measure, can be generalised to the overall organisational performance because in total it reflects the organisational performance.
Borman, (2004a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job performance is the most important measurement on organisation success. • Employees' Behaviour at work constitutes job performance.
Schermerhorn et al. (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance appraisal is a process of systematically evaluating. Performance and providing feedback on which performance adjustment can be made.
Jex and Britt (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job performance is oftentimes assessed in terms of financial figures and through the combination of expected Behaviour and related aspects. • Refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (ksao) that an individual has and must have in performing a certain job. • Employees should be provided with the knowledge, skills and abilities because the competence employee will be able to face the challenge in work environment and explore the existing opportunities. • Job performance is based on self-abilities, knowledge and internal motivation of the employees.

Table 2.4

Summary of the Literature - Qualities of Accounting Graduates

Author	Samples	Country	Findings
Lee and Blaszczynski (1999)	Accounting graduates	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting students to learn a multitude of skills including being able to communicate, work in a group environment, solve real-world problems, and use computer and Internet tools. Employers are looking for graduates who have work and life skills and are especially wanting graduates who have, among others, well-developed communication, team-work and problem-solving skills.
Siegel and Sorenson (1999)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers identifying communication skills, ability to work on a team, analytical skills, solid understanding of accounting, and understanding of how a business functions as being important for success.
AC Nielsen Research Services (2000)	Employers	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer perceived skill deficiencies in important areas, such as problem solving, creativity and flair, and oral business communications.
Albrecht and Sack (2000)	Accounting graduates	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three major changes in the business environment (technology, globalisation, and investor concentration) necessitate a more broadly educated accounting student. Accounting education should be integrated and students should only be taught relevant things. Students forget what they memorize. Content knowledge becomes dated and is often not transferable across different types of jobs. On the other hand critical skills rarely become obsolete and are usually transferable across assignments and careers.
de la Harpe et al. (2000)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers concerned that undergraduate programs are not producing graduates with the necessary skills for their careers.
Holmes (2000)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical skills are regarded as implicit in the skills base of a person entering an accounting career, but that it is a range of broader "personal characteristics" that facilitate career success and make accounting graduates more valuable to employers.
Athiyaman (2001)	Accounting students	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students felt that universities were still not delivering in terms of the development of those skills and attributes they considered important to their careers.

Table 2.4 (Continued)

Author	Samples	Country	Findings
Bennett et al. (2002)	Employers in UK	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers and employees alike had varying understandings of the importance of generic skills in the workplace.
Elliott and Jacobson (2002)	Practitioner and academics	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountants need education in complementary bodies of knowledge, such as organisational Behaviour, issues in strategic management, measurement and analytical skills.
Gabbin (2002)	Practitioner and academics	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni cpas and accounting educators should have a close relationship because accounting practitioners know better than anyone else what the profession has to offer top students, and expert insight about the changing nature of the profession and employer needs. Accounting educators should get regular and systematic feedback from the alumni about the changing business environment and their assessment of an accounting program's strengths and weaknesses.
Hunton (2002)	Accounting students	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argues that many traditional accounting tasks can be reliably automated. Accountant's worth is now increasingly reflected in higher-order skills.
Ismail and De Souza (2002)	140 managers	Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most important skills include: communication; business presentation; analytical and human affairs.
Akers and Porter (2003)	Practitioner and academics	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AICPA and the Institute of Management Accountants recognize that emotional intelligence skills are critical for the success of the accounting profession.
Employer Survey Spring, NJIT (2003)	3,617 organisations	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important Skills needed by graduates include: Problem solving; professional ethics; working groups; oral communication; computer; and writing.
Hodges & Burchell (2003)	Employers	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting graduates need to possess a combination of cognitive skills and personal or Behavioural characteristics.
Mathews (2004)	Practitioner and academics	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are not graduating with the broad, higher learning outcomes which should be achieved at university and that a more interdisciplinary curriculum is required. University accounting programs are managed as simply a series of distinct discipline-based areas.

Table 2.4 (Continued)

Author	Samples	Country	Findings
McPhail (2004)	Employers	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional intelligence (the ability to recognize, use and manage emotions) is critical for engaging with the world and that emotions are central in all rational decision making processes.
Lloyd (2008)	Employers	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current skills policy is centred on the need to drive up qualification obtainment and make the system more employer-led. Social skills are generally found to be of vital important and are often claimed to be lacking in the labour market.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the evidence that the employers are concerned and stressed on the importance of the level of good knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics for their future employees. Previous studies also argued that today's' accounting curriculum has met the need of the employers. This chapter also discussed the related literature on job performance and their association with KSAO. The next chapter discuss the theoretical framework and methodology that is employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the framework and method that is used in this study. It includes the research hypotheses development, research design, research instrument, operational definitions and the measurement of the variables, methods of analysis and chapter summary.

3.1 Research Framework

The framework in this research is as shown in Figure 3.1. Level of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristic are independent variables, while graduates' job performance is dependent variable. These variables are measured using the self-developed questionnaire, adopted from previous study (Albrecht and Sack, 2000; Normala, 2004).

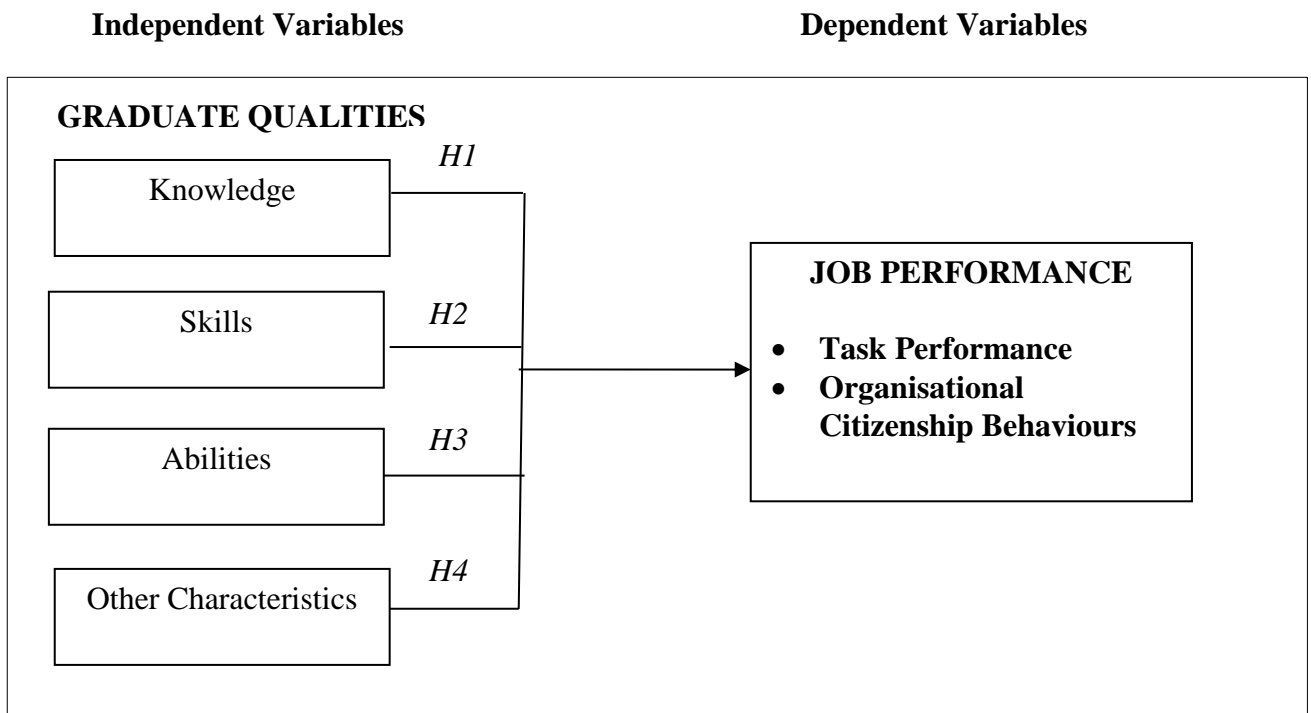


Figure 3.1
Research Framework

3.2 Hypotheses Development

The main purpose of this study is to examine the qualities (Knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) of Malaysia accounting graduates and their job performance. Discussion revealed that many students meet high academic standard with good CGPA (Bolt-Lee & Foster, 2003; Cappel, 2002; Pittenger, Miller & Mott, 2004). However, they failed to meet the requirement needed by the employers in performing their jobs (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Kerby & Romine, 2009).

Previous studies found that the qualities such as their achievement in study impact employers' intention to hire the accounting graduates (Cranner, 2006; Chen, et al., 2008).

Cranmer (2006) examined corporate decision making in hiring new employees. Chen, et al. (2008) also found that managers preferred employees that showed the greatest match between goals and values of the employees and those of the organisation. The managers believe that these skills and abilities can enhance their performance (Cranmer, 2006; Chen, et al., 2008).

Albrecht and Sack (2000) suggest that accounting education and curricular should be only taught relevant materials. In addition, Gabbin (2002) recommended the need that accounting faculty and practitioners should have close relationship because practitioners have better understanding what the profession needs from the accounting graduates. Studies also found that the accounting graduates were not taught the essential knowledge during their study and they were not well prepared to enter the profession (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2007; Albracht & Sack, 2000; Elliot & Jacobson, 2002).

Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and job performance.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and task performance.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and Organisation Citizenship Behaviour.

Previous studies also revealed that accounting graduates were not well prepared with the essential skills needed in the market (Grugulis, 2007; Lloyd, 2008). Many studies found that accounting graduates need to possess a combination of skill that is critical in the accounting profession (Ismail & De Souza, 2002; Hodges & Burchell, 2003; McPhil, 2004). Based on this statement, H2 is developed as below:

H2: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and job performance.

H2a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and task performance.

H2b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and Organisation Citizenship Behaviour.

Beside the essential skills, previous studies also emphasised the abilities that accounting graduates should have in their profession (Harris & Brown, 2000, Ramaswamy, 2005). They also identified the desired abilities needed by employers (DeGabriele, 2008). Hassall et al. (2005) suggests that accounting graduates should possess the combination of cognitive abilities and personal characteristics.

H3: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and job performance.

H3a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and task performance.

Hb3: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and Organisation Citizenship Behaviour Organisation Citizenship Behaviour.

Other characteristics such as self-confidence, leadership, teamwork and human relation were also crucial for employees in performing their job (Heneman & Judge, 2003). Similar findings could be found in Harvey et al. (1997) and Williams and Owen (1997). These scholars clearly stated that these characteristics are pertinent to organisation.

H4: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and job performance.

H4a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and task performance.

H4b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and Organisation Citizenship Behaviour.

Discussions above are strongly related to competency model applied in this study. Competency model discuss the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and characteristics needed by the employees (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency model also describes the competencies required of the employees. The model is used to align individual capabilities and human resource functions with organisational strategy (Dubois & Rothwell, 2000). It is also similar with the Resource-Based Theory which suggests that firm resources such as employees' performance influencing the growth and development of the organisation (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991).

3.3 Research Design

This study attempts to evaluate the qualities of accounting graduates (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) towards their job performance. According to Sekaran (2003), a research is done with four main purposes which include: exploratory, descriptive, hypotheses testing (analytical or predictive) or case study analysis. This study attempt to analyse the hypotheses and examine the specific relationship as previously outlined. This study also tries to examine the correlation between knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristic with graduates' job performance. It involved data collection from appropriate samples using structured questionnaire. Hence, quantitative approach was employed. Cresswell (2008) stated that quantitative study with appropriated method is more accurate compared to qualitative study. This is supported by Mohd. Majid (1998). Mohd. Majid supported that quantitative study allows researcher to examine the relationship between variables with more accuracy.

3.4 Population and Sample

3.4.1 The Population and Samples of the study

Respondents of this study are accountants and practitioners from auditing firms. The list of the organisations is based on Malaysian Institute of Accountants for 2011. The accountant and practitioners evaluated their employees who were Malaysia accounting graduates, graduated between the years 2005 to 2010 attached with their firms.

Table 3.1 shows the number of auditing firms in Malaysia. There were 2,059 auditing firms in Malaysia in 2011 and most of them are located in Selangor and Wilayah

Persekutuan. For this study, the samples were employers that comprise of accounting practitioners in auditing firms located in Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan. The selection of the states is based on the large number of the firms in the area.

Table 3.1
Number of Auditing Firm in Malaysia (2011)

State	No. of Auditing Firm	Percentage
<i>Wilayah Persekutuan</i>	705	34.24
<i>Selangor</i>	481	23.36
Johore	204	9.91
Penang	151	7.33
Sabah	115	5.59
Sarawak	112	5.44
Perak	102	4.95
Kedah	45	2.19
Malacca	45	2.19
Negeri Sembilan	35	1.70
Pahang	33	1.60
Kelantan	16	0.78
Terengganu	13	0.63
Perlis	2	0.10
Total	2059	100.00

Source: *Malaysian Institute of Accountant (MIA), 2011*

3.4.2 Sampling Procedure

In order to improve variability an optimal distribution and least biased, random sampling technique has been chosen. The proposed technique considers both sample size and the variation of each level (Zickmund, 2009). Random sampling increases statistical effectiveness, thus satisfying the requirement for improved quality of data. This technique involves the selection of elements from the population using random in which each elements of the population has an equal and independent chance of being chosen. As most of the firms are located in Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (refer

Table 3.1), employers of the auditing firms in these two states were selected as respondents.

Data from MIA (2011) in Table 3.1 shows the total numbers of auditing firms in Malaysia are 2,509. According to the sampling table (Table 3.2) from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for the population of 2,600, the minimum samples required are 335. However, to reduce the standard errors in the data and to get a higher respond rate, 400 employees from all auditing firms in Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor were selected as respondents.

Table 3.2
Table for Determining Sample Size from a Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size
"S" is sample size.

Source: *Krejcie and Morgan, 1970*

3.4.3 Data Collection

Researcher distributed the questionnaires to the employers in selected auditing firms in Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan, Kuala Lumpur. The employers were asked to evaluate their employees based on the given questionnaire. Questionnaires were hand delivered to the respondents. The completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

3.5 Unit of Analysis

This study attempted to evaluate the qualities of accounting graduates in Malaysia and the relationship with their job performance. Unit of analysis in this study were the employers or accounting practitioners.

3.6 Organisation of Research Variables

A survey questionnaire was used in this study. The questionnaire was adopted from previous study such as Albrecht and Sack (2000) and Normala (2004). Using this as a pilot study, a more comprehensive questionnaire was constructed. Respondents were asked to evaluate the relative importance of the subjects offered in a curriculum and professional skills that are required by the accounting profession. A five-point scale was used to measure the importance of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics.

Part A (1 to 7) of the questionnaire refers to the demographic information of the respondents. Areas addressed by the instrument included demographic information such

as position/designation, professional qualification, highest educational level, working experience, gender and ethnic.

Part B (1 to 21) is a list of content knowledge the graduate are required to have during their study. This section requires the employers to evaluate the preparedness of the accounting graduates towards all of the contents knowledge, using the five-points Likert

Scale as follows:

- 1: Not at all prepared
- 2: Not so prepared
- 3: Quite prepared
- 4: Prepared
- 5: Very prepared

Part C consist the list of skills (1 to 14), abilities (15 to 33) and other characteristics (34 to 39) that must be possessed by the graduates. This section also requires the respondents to evaluate how well the graduates possess the listed KSAO using the five-points Likert

Scale as follows:

- 1 = Does not meet standards
- 2 = Does not always meet standards
- 3 = Meets standards
- 4 = Sometime exceeds standards
- 5 = Always exceeds standards

Part D measures the dependent variable that is overall job performance. This section contains 30 questions using five-points Likert Scale.

- 1 = Does not meet standards
- 2 = Does not always meet standards
- 3 = Meets standards
- 4 = Sometime exceeds standards
- 5 = Always exceeds standards

Job performance is measured using two dimensions that are task performance (Section D(a) Q1 to Q7) and OCB (Section D(b) Q1 to Q30).

3.7 Operational Definitions and Measurement of the Variables

The variables were measured through the following:

3.7.1 Dependent Variable

Dependent variable used as the measurement in this study is the employees' job performance. Job Performance is about Behaviour of what employees produce (outcome) (Aguinis, 2007). Performance is determined by a combination of declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and motivation. Job performance is likely to be high when challenging goals have been set, the moderators (ability, goal, commitment, feedback, task complexity) are present and the mediators (direction, effort, persistence, task strategy) are operating (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2004). Task performance or also known as work performance refers to the specific activities required by the task or job description (Motowidlo, 2006). OCB is defined as activities that exceed the job requirement and contribute to the success of the organisation (Finkelstein, 2006) and a set of discretionary workplace Behaviours that exceed the basic job requirement.

Job performance is measured by two main construct which include a) task performance, and b) Organisation Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Refer Table 3.3). Task performance is measured by seven (7) items adopted by Normala (2004). Normala (2004) reported high internal consistency of task performance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). OCB is measured using 30 items with six sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions are sportsmanship (5 items), civic virtue (5 items), courtesy (5 items), altruism (5 items), conscientiousness (4 items),

and voice Behaviour (6 items). These measurements was also adopted from Normala (2004), with the moderate to high reliability i.e. ranges from 0.71 to 0.89 for each of OCB dimensions.

Table 3.3
Operational Definition and Measurement Items (Job Performance)

Variable	Definition	Item
Task performance	Specific activities required by the task or job description (Motowidlo, 2006)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate fulfils the responsibilities stated in his/her job descriptions; 2. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate performs tasks that are expected of him/her; 3. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate meets performance format recruitments of the job; 4. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is involved in activities that are relevant to his/her yearly performance assessment; 5. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate neglects aspects of the job that one is obliged to perform; 6. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate fails to perform essential duties; and 7. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate adequately completes assigned duties.
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)	Activities that exceed the job requirement and contribute to the success of the organisation, and a set of discretionary workplace Behaviours that exceed the basic job requirement. (Finkelstein, 2006)	<p>a) Sportsmanship:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always complains about things that are not important; 2. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always makes a big issue out of small matters; 3. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always find organisational ; 4. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always pay attention to matters that are negative rather than on matters that are positive; and 5. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always complains about work. <p>b) Altruism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate helps new workers to job and new working environment even though it is not required; 7. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is willing to helps others who have problems with their work; 8. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate helps those who have heavy workload; 9. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is always ready to offer help to those who needs it; 10. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate helps to do work of those co-workers who are not be able to come to work. <p>c) Courtesy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate tries to prevent from creating problems for the co-workers;

Table 3.3 (continued)

Variable	Definition	Item
		12. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate does not abuse the rights of others;
		13. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate always considers to impact on the co-workers
		14. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate takes steps to avoid problems with other workers;
		15. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is aware of how one's Behaviour effects others' job
		d) Civic Virtue
		16. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate reads and follows all announcements;
		17. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate keeps up to date with changes in the organisations;
		18. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is confident that if job is performed honestly, one will be rewarded accordingly;
		19. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate attends meetings that are not compulsory but considered important;
		20. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate attends functions that help improve company's image even if attendance is not compulsory
		e) Conscientiousness
		21. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate follows the company's rules and regulations even when no one is watching;
		22. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate does not take extra time for breaks ;
		23. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate often works beyond office hours even when it is not required;
		24. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate is one of the organisation's most honest employees
		f) Voice Behaviour
		25. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate makes innovative suggestions to improve one's department
		26. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate tries to adopt improved procedures for the department;
		27. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate tries to institute new effective working methods for the department
		28. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate provides constructive suggestions to improve how things operate in the department;
		29. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate makes recommendations on issues that affect the department;
		30. The Malaysian Accounting Graduate speaks up with ideas for new changes in procedures.

Source: *Normala 2004*

3.7.2 Independent Variables

The main objective is to measure knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics against the other dependent variable and come up with conclusion on how the objectives of this research are being made. Many studies have been carried out to determine the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics and employers perception and intention to hire (Grugulis, 2007; Bennett et al., 2002; Bridges, 2000; Holmes, 2001). The independent variables for this study are measured using regression analysis and correlation analysis which are shown and discussed in Chapter Four.

The following are the independent variables that were used as the measurement of this study.

3.7.2.1 Knowledge

Knowledge refers to organised factual assertions and procedures that, if applied, make adequate performance of a task possible (Vitalari, 1985; Cheney et al., 1990). Knowledge can be assessed through formal examination. Bloom (1984) defined knowledge as the recall of information including methodology, principles and theories. Krager, Ford and Salas (1993) defined knowledge as the information acquire and place into memory. The information is organised into known information, and understanding of how and when to use the required information.

Knowledge was measured using courses and items the graduates were taught and assessed during their accounting programme. 20 courses and items were used to measure graduates' knowledge. These items include compulsory core and accounting core. Table 3.4 summarised the definition and measurement item of knowledge.

Table 3.4

Operational Definition and Measurement Items - Knowledge

Variable	Definition	Item
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised factual assertions and procedures that, if applied, make adequate performance of a task possible (Cheney et al., 1990) • Recall of information including methodology, principles and theories Bloom (1984) • Information someone acquire and place into memory, how it is organised into the structure of what one already know, and understanding of how and when to use the information Krager et al. (1993) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditing/Assurance Services 2. Business Law 3. Business Strategy 4. Economics 5. Electronic Commerce 6. Ethics 7. Finance 8. Financial Accounting 9. Global/International Business 10. Government Accounting 11. Information Systems 12. Managerial Accounting 13. Management 14. Marketing 15. Organisational Behaviour / Human Resource Management 16. Research Methods 17. Statistics/Quantitative Methods 18. Taxation 19. Technology Topics 20. Practical Training

Source: *Albrecht and Sack* (2000)

3.7.2.2 Skills

Skill refers to the proficient manual, verbal or mental manipulation of tools, techniques and methods (Cheney et al., 1990; Nelson & Winter, 1982). Skills can be readily measured by a performance test where quantity and quality of performance are tested, usually within an established time limit. According to Dunnette (1976), skill is the capacities needed to perform a set of tasks, which are acquired from training and job-related experience. Skill is reflected on the extent a person is able to carry out a specific action or Behaviour like ability to communicate effectively. Skill is also dependent on knowledge that helps one to act accordingly (i.e knowing what to do, and when to do a particular action or task). However, knowing 'what' and 'when' to do something is different from actually 'able' to do it.

In addition, Henderson (2000) added that skill refers to dexterity, accuracy, and alertness required in understanding the workflow or levels of complexity in the use of and interaction with both human and nonhuman resources in performing assignments. Interaction with human requires individuals to be accurate and alert in managing mental, situation, and creativity (Ivancevich, 2003). Skills also require individual to be accurate, or alert in use of precision and non-precision tools, such as advance operating equipment and technological systems, advance keyboard devices, simple settings, and so forth. Likewise Dunnette (1976), Desimone, Werner, and Harris (2002) believed that skills can be developed over time by attending training programs. Steinberg, Najman, Donald, McChesney-Clark, and Mahon (1994), revealed that training is more frequently given to the younger employees compared to their older counterparts.

List of important skills and its definition used in the study are summarised in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Operational Definition and Measurement Items - Skills

Variable	Definition	Item
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficient manual, verbal or mental manipulation of tools, techniques and methods (Cheney et al., 1990; Nelson & Winter, 1982) • capacities needed to perform a set of tasks, which are acquired from training and job-related experience Dunnette (1976) • Dexterity, accuracy, alertness required in understanding the workflow/levels of complexity and interaction with both human and nonhuman resources in performing assignments Henderson (2000) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effective English oral communication skills 2. Effective English written communication skills 3. Solving problems 4. Interpersonal Skill 5. Report Writing 6. Programming Skills 7. Design Web Based Applications 8. Decision Making 9. Presentation Skill 10. Listening Skill 11. Supervising Skill 12. Negotiating Skill 13. Leadership Skill 14. Critical Thinking

Source: *Albrecht and Sack (2000)*

3.7.2.3 Abilities

Ability refers to the power to perform an observable activity at the present time (Cheney et al., 1990; Renck et al., 1969). Abilities can be observed and measured through Behaviours that are similar to those required in a given role. Abilities are realised aptitudes. Aptitudes are the potential for performing a Behaviour.

Even though Blanchard and Thacker (1999) argued that ability can hardly be distinguished from knowledge and skill, Fleishman (1972) defined abilities as the general capacities related to performing a set of tasks. Abilities, which originates from hereditary and experience, can be developed over time (Fleishman, 1972). Similarly, Henderson (2000) described ability as a general trait or quality acquired by an individual, which is useful in performing a range of tasks. Unlike skills, ability is less likely to change over time because it is applicable across various tasks of different jobs. Abilities can be categorized into cognitive abilities, psychomotor abilities, physical abilities, and sensory abilities (Henderson, 2000).

In this study, the list of abilities used and its definition are as shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6
Operational Definition and Measurement Items - Abilities

Variable	Definition	Item
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to perform an observable activity at the present time (Cheney et al., 1990; Renck et al., 1969) • General capacities related to performing a set of tasks Fleishman (1972) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to apply analytical techniques 2. Ability to apply theoretical knowledge 3. Management of risk 4. Managing complex and ambiguous situation 5. Working across functional boundaries 6. Identification of new technological opportunity 7. Integration of technology and business strategy 8. Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation 9. Accounting Application System (eg. UBS) 10. Design Web Based Applications 11. Time Management 12. Work Prioritisation 13. Critical Thinking 14. Managing subordinates 15. Able to work independently 16. Able to work in group/teams 17. thinking creatively 18. Ability to do research 19. Ability to adapt to new work environment

Source: *Albrecht and Sack* (2000)

3.7.2.4 Other Characteristics

Other characteristics are all other aspects, besides knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are crucial to the job. It is crucial for employees to have other characteristics before entering employment. For instance, employers have to make sure that the selected employees possess values that are consistent with the organisational culture and values (Heneman & Judge, 2003). According to Heneman and Judge (2003), other characteristics can be categorized into three main groups: (i) legal requirements, for example possession of license, citizens or legal alien, geographic residency, security clearance, etc.; (ii) availability requirements, such as for instance starting date, worksite locations, travel, attendance and tardiness, etc. and (iii) character requirements, for example moral, work ethic, background, honesty, and integrity. In this study, other characteristics are gauged in terms of work styles and job values. Work styles are further subdivided into achievement orientation, social influence, practical intelligence, conscientiousness, adjustment, and interpersonal orientation. Job values are measured in the aspects of achievement, status, autonomy, and altruism.

Other characteristics items used in the study are as Table 3.7

Table 3.7

Operational Definition and Measurement Items – Other Characteristics

Variable	Definition	Item
Other Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other aspects, besides knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are crucial to the job (Heneman & Judge, 2003) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Self-confidence Assertiveness Decisiveness Flexibility Judgment Stress tolerance

Source: *Albrecht and Sack (2000)*

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were managed and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. Various analysis methods used to test the reliability, validity and to answer the hypotheses developed earlier.

3.8.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis produces the frequency tables that show the distribution of the item. It explain the characteristic and the phenomena of which item is tested.

3.8.2 Inferential Analysis

3.8.2.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability and validity analysis (factor analysis) are necessary to test the survey instrument (Sekaran, 2003; Zickmund, 2003; Cresswell, 2008). The test determines that the instrument is suitable and able to test all measurement and variables and to answer the research questions.

3.8.2.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to study the relationship between variables (Zickmund, 2003). It also tests the relationship between dependent and independent variables. This procedure computes Pearson's correlation coefficient, with their significance levels. Correlations measure how variables or rank orders are related. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a measure of linear association (Cresswell, 2008).

3.8.2.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis produces the relationship between dependent (DV) and independent variables (IV) (Cresswell, 2008). It also measure how much the IV explained the DV, estimates the coefficients of the linear equation, involving one or more independent variables that best predict the value of the dependent variable. The regression model that is used in the study is as follows.

$$JPerf = \alpha + \beta_1 know + \beta_2 Skill + \beta_3 Ability + \beta_4 other + \varepsilon$$

Where:

JPerf = Dependent Variable (Job Performance)

Know = Knowledge

Skill = Skills

Ability = Abilities

Other = Other Characteristics

α = Constant

β = coefficient

ε = Standard Error

Prior to using multiple regression analysis to explore relationships among variables, all the assumptions recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) have been fulfilled, such as 1) sample size, 2) multicollinearity and singularity, 3) outliers, normality and homodescedascity of residuals.

The first assumption is to meet the minimum sample size to generalise the population (Green, 1991). The formula for calculating the number of samples for testing multiple correlation is: $N \geq 50 + 8k$ (k = number of predictors) if the test covers the overall model. For this study, with 4 predictors, the minimum sample required is $50 + 8(4) = 82$ samples. The sample size for this study is 325.

The second assumption pertains to multicollinearity and singularity which are related to the correlations between the predictors' variables. Singularity occurs when one of the independent variable merged with other independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Multicollinearity poses a problem for multiple regression when the independent variables are highly correlated ($r = 0.8$ and above). When such case happens, the regression coefficients would not be significant due to high standard error. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), tolerance values approaching zero (0) specify the presence of high multicollinearity. The cut-off value for Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is less than 10 and tolerance value of more than 0.1. Hence, as report in the report, there is no violation of the assumption for this study. All the independent variables' tolerance value of more than 0.1 and VIF value of less than 10 (refer Appendix 2). The third assumption in applying regression analysis is to ensure that there would not be any outliers when multiple regressions were applied. Outliers were detected using Mahalanobis Chi-square statistic. Therefore this assumption is not violated.

For better understanding of the analysis used in this study, Table 3.8 describes the statistical analysis used to answer the research questions (RQ) outlined in Chapter 1. RQ1

identifies the level of qualities and job performance. Level of qualities and job performance can be found by computing the mean value or the average score of the variables. Mean score is computed using descriptive analysis. RQ2 attempted to examine the relationship between two variables (X,Y), that is to study the strength of the association and to compute the effect of independent variables (X) dependent variable (Y). To answer RQ2, multiple linear regression was adapted.

Table 3.8
Method of Analysis by Research Question

Research Question	Method of Analysis
1. What is the extent of the level of qualities (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) and job performance of the Malaysia accounting graduates?	Descriptive Analysis (<i>mean, sd, etc</i>)
2. What is the relationship between Malaysian accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance?	Regression Analysis (R^2 , F , B , t)

Correlation and regression analysis are constructed under different assumptions. They furnish different types of information and it is not always clear as to which measure should be used in a given problem situation. The following are the points of difference between the two:

1. Correlation coefficient is a measure of degree of co-variability between X and Y, the objective of regression analysis is to study the 'nature of relationship' between the variables so that researcher may be able to predict the value of one on the basis of another.

2. Correlation is merely a tool of ascertaining the degree of relationship between two variables and, therefore, it cannot be concluded that one variable is the cause and other the effect. However, in regression analysis, one variable is taken as dependent while the other as independent, thus making it possible to study the cause and effect relationship. It should be noted that the presence of association does not imply causation, but the existence of causation always implies association. Statistical evidence can only establish the presence or absence of association between variables, whether causation exists or not depends purely on reasoning.
3. In correlation analysis r_{xy} is a measure of direction and degree of linear relationship between two variables X and Y. r_{xy} and r_{yx} are symmetric ($r_{xy} = r_{yx}$) i.e., it is immaterial which of X and Y is dependent variable and which is independent variable. In regression analysis the regression coefficient b_{xy} and b_{yx} are not symmetric, i.e., $b_{xy} \neq b_{yx}$ and hence it definitely makes a difference as to which variable is dependent and which is independent.
4. Correlation coefficient is independent of change of scale and origin while regression coefficients are independent of change of origin but not of scale.

3.9 Pilot Study

Pre-test is very important before using the questionnaire to gather data (Cresswell, 2008). Those who conduct pre-test are a prudent researcher (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). They state that among the most important pre-test exercise are face validity, content validity, and a pilot study. Researcher should make sure that questions in the

instrument are understood, appropriate and reflect the goal of the study. Sekaran (2002) clarifies that pre-testing survey questions is the test of the understand ability and appropriateness of the questions planned to be included in a regular survey.

The purpose of pilot study is to test and improve the validity and reliability of the research instrument. This procedure is necessary before performing the actual data collection to ensure that respondents understood the instructions and the questions asked. The main reason for performing a pilot test is to reduce measurement error and increase reliability and validity of the research, and in particular of the research design and methodology.

To verify the validity and reliability of the instrument before conducting the actual study, the instrument was tested for its clarity, validity, and reliability. The instrument was piloted by administering it to 50 employers and academician. According to Sekaran (2003), the minimum reliable subjects to run the pilot are 30 respondents. It is expected that the pilot study provides an opportunity for the researcher to improve both the format and the language features of the research instrument before using it for actual data collection.

3.9.1 Validity Analysis (Factor Analysis)

Factor analysis deals with the degree to which the construct or scale represents and acts like the concept being measured (Davis & Consenza, 1988). The construct validity was assessed both from the theoretical and statistical perspective. The instruments for the

variables in this study were established from previous studies that supported the theoretical construct validity.

The principal technique that was performed on all the constructs to support the statistical construct validity was to examine the Varimax rotation principal components analysis (PCA). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) fully supported the PCA for the factor extraction over the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) especially for empirical summary of data set. All the factors for variables in this study were considered as multi-dimensional. The purpose is to validate the scales and to determine the factor loading.

All the independent and dependent variables were submitted to PCA to determine their factor loading. As a rule of thumb, Tabachnick & Fidell, (2001) suggested that only variable with a loading of 0.32 and above should be considered. Nevertheless, Comrey and Lee (1992) interpreted that any loading that exceeds 0.71 is considered excellent, 0.63 as “very good”, 0.55 as “good”, 0.45 as “fair”, and 0.32 as “poor”. However, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) indicated that the cut off point for size of loading is a matter of researcher’s preference. For this study, based on the size of loadings which were influenced by homogeneity of scores in the samples, a factor loading which is higher than 0.45 was considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

In addition, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) have indicated that in order to conduct factor analysis, a total number of more than 150 samples would be ideal. For this study a usable sample size of 400 was employed. Another consideration for factor analysis as suggested

by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) is Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic should be a minimum of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974). If this value falls below the minimum value, it is recommended that either more data be collected or that other variables should be included (Field, 2009). Hutchison and Sofroniou (1999) interpreted the KMO values at being between 0.5 and 0.7 as “mediocre”, 0.7 and 0.8 as “good”, values between 0.8 and 0.9 “are great” and value above 0.9 as “superb”.

3.9.1.1 Graduates’ Qualities

The measurement scales for Graduates’ Qualities consisted of 59-items. The Varimax rotated principal components factor analysis was conducted. Prior to performing the principal components analysis (PCA), the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Correlation matrix indicated item coefficients were 0.3 and above. There were a total of two statistical measures to assess the factorability of the data conducted through 1) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to determine the “measure of sampling adequacy” value. The value reported was 0.951, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974); 2) Barlett’s test of sphericity (Barlett, 1954) is significant at $p < 0.001$. Since the KMO value is reported as 0.951, it is interpreted as in the range of “superb” (Hutchinson & Sofroniou, 1999). Therefore, the sample size here is adequate for factor analysis. The total variance explained is reported as 63.76%. Only factors with a loading value of 0.45 and above were considered. Hence, no items were deleted. Factor loading accepted all four factors based on original items. Table 3.9 below shows the factor loading value for this scale.

Table 3.9
Factor Loading for Graduates' Qualities

	Factor Loading			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Factor 1: Skills				
Accounting Application System (eg. UBS)	.782			
oral communication skills	.782			
written communication skills	.736			
Solving problems	.785			
Interpersonal Skill	.822			
Report Writing	.592			
Programming Skills	.482			
Design Web Based Applications	.502			
Decision Making	.487			
Presentation Skill	.441			
Listening Skill	.563			
Supervising Skill	.773			
Negotiating Skill	.595			
Leadership Skill	.479			
Critical Thinking	.487			
Factor 2: Knowledge				
Auditing/Assurance Services		.728		
Business Law		.656		
Business Strategy		.614		
Economics		.780		
Electronic Commerce		.723		
Ethics		.782		
Finance		.750		
Financial Accounting		.733		
Global/International Business		.482		
Government Accounting		.838		
Information Systems		.738		
Managerial Accounting		.818		
Management		.756		
Marketing		.729		
Organisational Behaviour / HR Management		.596		
Research Methods		.739		
Statistics/Quantitative Methods		.730		
Taxation		.453		
Technology Topics		.495		
Practical Training		.470		

Table 3.9 (Continued)

	Factor Loading			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Factor 3: Abilities				
Ability to apply analytical techniques			.655	
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge			.758	
Management of risk			.598	
Managing complex and ambiguous situation			.556	
Working across functional boundaries			.702	
Identification of new technological opportunity			.646	
Integration of technology and business strategy			.484	
Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation			.699	
Design Web Based Applications			.691	
Time Management			.645	
Work Prioritisation			.502	
Critical Thinking			.755	
Managing subordinates			.825	
Factor 4: Other Characteristics				
Able to work independently				.740
Able to work in group/teams				.777
thinking creatively				.588
Ability to do research				.794
Ability to adapt to new work environment				.713
Self-confidence				.770
Assertiveness				.757
Decisiveness				.773
Flexibility				.861
Judgment				.804
Stress tolerance				.599
Eigenvalue	22.087	17.635	11.426	5.110
Percentage	31.811	14.392	10.710	6.851
KMO	.951			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	36362.426			
Sig.	0.000			

3.9.1.2 Job Performance

The measurement scales for job performance consisted of 37-items. The Varimax rotated principal components factor analysis was conducted. Prior to performing the principal components analysis (PCA), the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Correlation matrix indicated item coefficients were 0.3 and above. There were a total of two statistical measures to assess the factorability of data conducted through i) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to determine the “measure of sampling adequacy” value. The value reported was 0.890, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974); ii) Barlett’s test of sphericity (Barlett, 1954) is significant at $p < 0.001$. Since the KMO value is reported as 0.890, it is interpreted as in the range of “great” (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Therefore the sample size here is adequate for factor analysis. Factor loading also accepted seven (7) factors based on the original instrument. The total variance explained is reported as 70.35%. Only factors with a loading value of 0.45 and above were considered. Therefore, no items were deleted. Table 3.10 below shows the factor loading value for this scale.

Table 3.10
Factor Loading of Job Performance

	Factor Loading						
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Factor 1: Task Performance							
He/she fulfills the responsibilities stated in the job descriptions.	.629						
He/she performs tasks that are expected	.626						
He/she meets format performance recruitments of the job	.809						
He/she is involved in activities that are relevant to the yearly performance assessment	.642						
He/she neglects aspects of the job that one is obliged to perform	.586						

Table 3.10 (Continued)

	Factor Loading						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she fails to perform essential duties.	.815						
He/she adequately completes assigned duties.	.870						
Factor 2: OCB (Sportsmanship)							
He/she always complains about things that are not important.		-.632					
He/she always makes a big issue out of small matters.		-.460					
He/she always find faults within the organisation.		.729					
He/she always pay attention to matters that are negative rather than on matters that are positive.		.831					
He/she always complains about work.		.758					
Factor 3: OCB (Altruism)							
He/she helps new workers to adapt even though it is not required.			.703				
He/she willing to helps others who have problems with their work.			.756				
He/she helps others who have heavy workload.			.549				
He/she always ready to offer help to those around him/her.			.645				
He/she helps to do work of those co-workers who are not able to come to work.			.562				
Factor 4: OCB (Courtesy)							
He/she tries to prevent from creating problems with one's co-workers.				.880			
He/she does not abuse the rights of others.				.690			
He/she always considers the impact of his/her action on co-workers.				.675			

Table 3.10 (Continued)

	Factor Loading						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she takes steps to avoid problems with other workers.				.669			
He/she is aware of how his/her Behaviour effects others' job.				.835			
Factor 5: OCB (Civic Virtue)							
He/she reads and follows all announcements.					.466		
He/she keeps up to date with changes in the organisations.					.682		
He/she is confident that if he/she does his/her job honestly; he/she will be rewarded accordingly.					.625		
He/she attends meetings that are not compulsory but considered important.					.489		
He/she attends functions that help improve company's image even though his/her attendance is not compulsory.					.516		
Factor 6: OCB (Conscientiousness)							
He/she follows the company's rules and regulations even when no one is watching.						.849	
He/she does not take extra time for breaks.						.757	
He/she often work beyond office hours even though not required.						.792	
He/she is one of the organisation's most honest employees.						.647	
Factor 7: OCB (Voice Behaviour)							
He/she make innovative suggestions to improve the department.							.796
He/she tries to improve procedures for this department.							.745

Table 3.10 (Continued)

	Factor Loading						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
He/she tries to institute more effective working methods for the department.							.545
He/she provides constructive suggestions to improve how things should be operated in the department.							.702
He/she make recommendations on issues that affect the department.							.730
He/she speaks up with ideas for new changes in procedures.							.803
Eigenvalue	12.762	5.989	3.359	2.421	2.178	1.854	1.467
Percentage	23.682	16.187	9.078	6.542	5.886	5.011	3.965
KMO	0.890						
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1565.138						
Sig.	0.000						

3.9.2 Reliability Analysis

The reliability of an instrument refers to its ability to produce consistent and stable measurements. Sekaran (2003) explains that reliability can be seen from two sides: reliability (the extent of accuracy) and unreliability (the extent of inaccuracy). To test the reliability of the pilot study, the test employed internal consistency method measured by Cronbach's alpha. The reliability is expressed as a coefficient between 0 and 1.00. The higher the coefficient the more reliable is the test. The most common reliability coefficient is the Cronbach's alpha which estimates internal consistency by determining

how all items on a test relate to all other items and to the total test - internal coherence of data.

As the measurement of instrument used in this study was the questionnaire constructed in several questions, the measurement instrument used is the internal consistency by Cronbach's coefficient. Cronbach's alpha implies positive relationship of one item to another. Acceptable Cronbach's alpha is .65 (Zickmund, 2009; Sekaran, 2003; Hair, et al., 2010). Alpha score for each dimension in content knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics and job performance are as shown in Table 3.11. It is found that Cronbach's alpha for all dimensions ranged from 0.73 to 0.94, indicating the acceptable values.

Table 3.11
Reliability Analysis of the Instrument

Dimensions	N of Item	Alpha
Contents Knowledge	20	0.854
Skills	14	0.839
Abilities	19	0.835
Other Characteristic	6	0.727
Job Performance	37	0.741
Task Performance	7	0.820
OCB	30	0.942

3.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 described the type of study (quantitative design) and research participants. This chapter also provides detailed description of the research design and specific data collection, analysis, and integration methods. Trustworthiness and validity in the context of post-positivist research were also addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data analyses and reports on the statistical testing results. Firstly, the profile of the respondents is described. This is followed by the presentation of results of the analysis of independent and dependent variables using reliability analysis. It is followed by descriptive analysis. Lastly, the results of hypotheses testing are also presented.

4.2 Background of the Respondent

Responds from 325 respondents were analysed. Table 4.1 described the distribution of the respondents according to their demographic background. 9.5 percent of the respondents were partners in the auditing firms, 31.7 percent were senior executive and 58.8 percent were executives. Majority of the respondent were members of MICPA (60.3%). Other respondents were members of CPA Australia (21.5%), CIMA (11.1%), ACCA (5.2%) and other professional qualification (1.8%). More than half of the employers also had at least obtained the bachelor degree (67.4%). They have been with the firm between 6 to 10 years (47.1%) and 11 to 15 years (44.0%). Majority of them were male (66.5%) and Malay (47.1%).

Table 4.1
Background of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Position		
Partner	31	9.5
Senior Executive	103	31.7
Executive	191	58.8
Professional Qualification		
MICPA	196	60.3
CPA Australia	70	21.5
CIMA	36	11.1
ACCA	17	5.2
Others	6	1.8
Education Level		
<Diploma	17	5.2
Bachelor Degree	219	67.4
Master Degree	81	24.9
PhD	4	1.2
Others	4	1.2
Experience		
<5 years	29	8.9
6 - 10 years	153	47.1
11 - 15 years	143	44.0
Gender		
Male	216	66.5
Female	109	33.5
Ethnic		
Malay	153	47.1
Chinese	127	39.1
Indian	24	7.4
Others	21	6.5

4.3 Data Preparation and Screening

This section discusses on the data screening procedures, which include the detection of missing data and detection of outliers. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 337 were returned. 12 of them were deleted (refer section 4.3.3) and only 325 were used for further analysis making the response rate of 81.25 percent.

4.3.1 Detection of Missing Data

Hair et al. (2010) described missing data as “*information not available for a case about whom other information is available*”. Missing data for this study was reduced by checking for possible errors in all the variables at the point of time they were collected. For the surveys, any unanswered questions were referred back to the respondent. To ensure that all the data were cleaned, frequency distribution and missing value analysis for each variable were conducted.

4.3.2 Non-Response Bias Test

Non-response bias occurs in statistical surveys if the answers of respondents differ from the potential answers of those who did not answer. For purposes of this research, non-response bias is defined as a bias that exists in survey results when respondents to a survey are different from those who did not respond in terms of demographic or attitudinal variables, or other variables relevant to the survey topic (DDS Research, Inc., 2004). According to Ellis, Endo and Armer (1970) it is a function of: (a) the proportion of non-respondents in the total sample and (b) the extent to which there is a systematic discrepancy between respondents and non-respondents on variables relevant to the inquiry. The presence of non-response bias is a threat to the external validity or generalizability of research findings to the target population of a study (Linder, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). A well-designed survey and a research-based administration method, following generally acceptable protocols and procedures as well as reporting them in the research analysis, are the first-steps in the attempt to increase response rates and also

control for non-response bias (Dillman, 2000; Linder, Murphy & Briers, 2001; Porter, 2004b).

The approach to test non response bias is using t-test analysis. For the purpose of this study, the responses were categorised into first and second wave. First wave were the responses received in one month after distribution of the questionnaire, while second wave were the responses received after one month of the distribution. Mean score for all variables; were then computed for both wave of data. The mean scores were compared to examine the differences in two waves of responses. The results are shown in Table 4.2. It is found that there are no differences in two sources of responses in all variables. Hence, the data used in this study is free from bias.

Table 4.2
Independence Sample t-test for Non-Response Bias Test

	Data Collector		t	Sig.
	1st wave	2nd wave		
Performance	4.6687	4.8151	-1.112	.115
Knowledge	3.9864	4.1848	-1.298	.398
Skills	3.8274	3.9635	-.641	.058
Abilities	4.0652	4.2422	-.954	.105
Other Characteristics	3.8274	3.9635	-.641	.058

4.3.3 Detection of Outliers

Outliers defined by Hair et al (2010) as an observation with a “*unique combination of characteristics identifiable as distinctly different*” from the other observations. In addition, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) and Field (2009) also recommended graphic methods of detecting outliers such as histograms and normal probability plots. For this study, outliers were detected using mahalanobis method. 12 cases were found to have the characteristics of outliers and were then deleted from the analysis.

4.4 Reliability of the Variables

To ensure the reliability of the scales, internal consistency confirmation of the scales was performed by checking the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The cut-off point for measuring the reliability for this study is coefficient alpha of above 0.65 as recommended by Cresswell, 2008; Zickmund, 2009; and Sekaran and Bougie, (2010). Table 4.3 exhibits the Cronbach coefficient alpha of the variables. All the variables in this study have values more than 0.7.

Table 4.3
Reliability Coefficients of the Variables

Construct	N of Item	Cronbach Alpha
Knowledge	20	0.789
Skills	15	0.849
Abilities	17	0.806
Other Characteristics	6	0.702
Job Performance		
Task Performance	7	0.827
Organisation Citizenship Behaviour	37	0.908
Sportmanship	7	0.805
Altruism	5	0.703
Courtesy	5	0.761
Civic Virtue	5	0.756
Conscientiousness	4	0.793
Voice Behaviour	7	0.827

4.5 Normality Test

The normality of distribution of data was examined by the skewness and kurtosis values for each variable. Skewness values present the symmetry of the distribution score, and a skew variable's mean will not be at the centre of this distribution; while kurtosis confer information about the "peakness" of distribution which can be either too peaked (with short and thick tail) or too flat (with long and thin tail) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Normal distribution is considered when value of skewness and kurtosis is at zero (0). Positive skewness value have a cluster of cases to the left at a low value and negative skewness have the score cluster or pile at the right side with a long left tail (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Kurtosis with values of below zero (0) indicate a relative flat distribution known as "platykurtic" and the kurtosis values above zero (0) indicate a peak distribution or "leptokurtic". It is recommended by researchers that samples be large enough (minimum 200) to prevent under-estimation of variance. Hair et al. (2010) recommended the rejection of the normality assumptions at absolute values of ± 3.29 at $p < 0.001$ significant level, ± 2.58 at $p < 0.01$ significant level and ± 1.96 at $p < 0.05$ significant level.

To assess the normality of the variables, the above suggestions were applied. Interestingly, none of the variables fell outside the ± 3.29 at $p < 0.001$ probability range level. This was expected as the sample size was 400. Table 4.4 is a summary of the kurtosis and skewness for all the variables. The data shows the variables were normally distributed. Therefore, in conclusion, all the variables do not deviate the normality test requirement.

Table 4.4
Normality Test of the Variables

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis
Knowledge	.190	-.240
Skills	-.104	-.392
Abilities	-.032	-.380
Other Characteristics	-.172	-.230
Job Performance		
Task Performance	-.118	-.269
Organisation Citizenship Behaviour	-.594	.478
Sportmanship	.313	1.291
Altruism	.414	.185
Courtesy	-1.049	1.246
Civic Virtue	-.942	.499
Conscientiousness	-.581	.910
Voice Behaviour	-1.026	1.022

4.6 Descriptive Analysis

This section attempts to answer Research Question 1: What is the extent of the level of qualities (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) and job performance of the Malaysian accounting graduates?

Descriptive analysis was used to determine the level of perceptions towards each variables and dimensions. In order to determine the perception level of these factors, the mean were computed and the middle point were used to separate the level from low, moderate and high as mentioned by Healey (2005). The mean score is divided into three levels as follows:

- Low = 1.00 to 2.25
- Moderate = 2.26 to 3.66
- High = 3.67 to 5.00

4.6.1 Knowledge

Descriptive analysis examining the level of knowledge among accounting graduates is summarised in Table 4.5. Employers were asked to indicate their perception towards the preparedness of the accounting graduates on the listed knowledge using five scale of answers, ranging from 1 = Not at all prepared to 5 = Very prepared. Results show that graduates were very well prepared in financial accounting (M = 4.48, SD = 0.68), managerial accounting (M = 4.46, SD = 0.64) and Auditing/Assurance Services (M = 4.45, SD = 0.65). The level of accounting graduates' knowledge were also high in Global/International Business (M = 4.44, SD = 0.65), Taxation (M = 4.39, SD = 0.70), Finance (M = 4.08, SD = 0.71), Government Accounting (M = 4.07, SD = 0.75), Information System (M = 4.04, SD = 0.77), Marketing (M = 4.03, SD = 0.7), Electronic Commerce (M = 3.94, SD = 0.89), Management (M = 3.93, SD = 0.85), Organisational Behaviour/Human Resource Management (M = 3.72, SD = 0.95) and Statistics/Quantitative Methods (M = 3.66, SD = 0.85). Accounting graduates showed the moderate level of knowledge to the other items as follows: Practical Training (M = 3.59, SD = 0.93), Business Law (mean = 3.56, SD = 0.91), Research Methods (M = 3.54, SD = 1.01), Business Strategy (M = 3.50, SD = 0.81), Technology Topics (M = 3.36, SD = 0.87), Ethics (M = 3.34, SD = 0.99) and economics (M = 3.34, SD = 0.99).

Table 4.5
Level of Knowledge among Accounting Graduates

Items	Mean	SD	Level
1. Financial Accounting	4.48	0.68	High
2. Managerial Accounting	4.46	0.64	High
3. Auditing/Assurance Services	4.45	0.65	High
4. Global/International Business	4.44	0.66	High
5. Taxation	4.39	0.70	High
6. Finance	4.08	0.71	High
7. Government Accounting	4.07	0.75	High
8. Information Systems	4.04	0.77	High
9. Marketing	4.03	0.77	High
10. Electronic Commerce	3.94	0.89	High
11. Management	3.93	0.86	High
12. Organisational Behaviour/Human Resource Management	3.72	0.95	High
13. Statistics/Quantitative Methods	3.66	0.85	High
14. Practical Training	3.59	0.93	Moderate
15. Business Law	3.56	0.91	Moderate
16. Research Methods	3.54	1.01	Moderate
17. Business Strategy	3.50	0.81	Moderate
18. Technology Topics	3.36	0.87	Moderate
19. Ethics	3.34	1.29	Moderate
20. Economics	3.34	1.29	Moderate

4.6.2 Skills

Employer's perception towards accounting graduates skills were illustrated in Table 4.6. It is found that employers perceived that accounting graduates perform high skills. They perceived that accounting graduates were well equipped in Accounting Application System (M = 4.48, SD = 0.65), written (M = 4.45, SD = 0.66) and oral (M = 4.39, SD = 0.68) communication skills, negotiating skills (M = 4.35, SD = 0.70) and decision skill (M = 4.35, SD = 0.65). it was followed by report writing (M = 4.34, SD = 0.65), supervising skill (M = 4.30, SD = 0.66) presentation skill (M = 4.30, SD = 0.70), solving problem (M = 4.24, SD = 0.68) and critical thinking (M = 4.12, SD = 0.68). However, employers perceived that accounting graduates were lack of interpersonal skill (M = 3.46, SD = 0.91).

Table 4.6
Level of Skills among Accounting Graduates

Items	Mean	SD	Level
1. Accounting Application System	4.48	0.65	High
2. Written communication skills	4.45	0.66	High
3. Oral communication skills	4.39	0.68	High
4. Negotiating Skill	4.35	0.70	High
5. Decision Making	4.35	0.65	High
6. Report Writing	4.34	0.65	High
7. Supervising Skill	4.30	0.66	High
8. Presentation Skill	4.30	0.70	High
9. Solving problems	4.24	0.68	High
10. Critical Thinking	4.12	0.78	High
11. Leadership Skill	4.11	0.70	High
12. Programming Skills	4.03	0.77	High
13. Design Web Based Applications	3.94	0.86	High
14. Listening Skill	3.81	0.79	High
15. Interpersonal Skill	3.46	0.91	Moderate

4.6.3 Abilities

Accounting graduates' abilities were measured using 17 items. The descriptive analysis results to examine the level of abilities among accounting graduates were summarised in Table 4.7. It was found that employers perceived that the level of accounting graduates' abilities were high, especially in applying analytical techniques ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.59$) critical thinking ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.66$) and able to work independently ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.63$). Accounting graduates were also found to show high level of abilities in managing sub-ordinates ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.70$), ability to apply theoretical knowledge ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.67$), perform technological assessment and re-evaluation ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.69$), able to work in group/team (mean = 4.32, $SD = 0.70$) and integration of technology and business strategy ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.81$). Results also revealed that accounting graduates

were lack of creative thinking ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.89$), managing complex and ambiguous situation ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.08$) and time management ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.29$).

Table 4.7
Level of Abilities among Accounting Graduates

Items	Mean	SD	Level
1. Ability to apply analytical techniques	4.56	0.59	High
2. Critical Thinking	4.52	0.66	High
3. Able to work independently	4.51	0.63	High
4. Managing subordinates	4.34	0.70	High
5. Ability to apply theoretical knowledge	4.33	0.67	High
6. Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation	4.32	0.69	High
7. Able to work in group/teams	4.32	0.70	High
8. Integration of technology and business strategy	4.07	0.81	High
9. Working across functional boundaries	4.06	0.76	High
10. Work Prioritisation	4.04	0.76	High
11. Management of risk	4.02	0.73	High
12. Ability to adapt to new work environment	4.00	0.77	High
13. Identification of new technological opportunity	3.97	0.79	High
14. Ability to do research	3.74	0.89	High
15. Thinking creatively	3.64	0.89	Moderate
16. Managing complex and ambiguous situation	3.46	1.08	Moderate
17. Time Management	3.34	1.29	Moderate

4.6.4 Other Characteristics

Accounting graduates were also found to show high level of qualities in other characteristics (refer Table 4.8). Employers perceived that accounting graduates were well equipped with assertiveness ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.85$), flexibility ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.76$), self-confidence ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.82$) and decisiveness ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.85$). However, it was also found that accounting graduates were lack of judgement ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.88$) and stress tolerance ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.88$).

Table 4.8
Level of Other Characteristics among Accounting Graduates

Items	Mean	SD	Level
1. Assertiveness	4.11	0.85	High
2. Flexibility	3.85	0.76	High
3. Self-confidence	3.81	0.82	High
4. Decisiveness	3.76	0.85	High
5. Judgment	3.52	0.88	Moderate
6. Stress tolerance	3.46	0.88	Moderate

4.6.5 Job Performance

Mean and standard deviation indicated by respondents to examine the level of accounting graduates' job performance is shown in Table 4.9. It is indicated in the table that the level of job performance in terms of task performance was in the moderate level ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.50$), where OCB showed higher mean ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.32$). Among the sub-dimension of OCB, accounting graduates showed the highest level conscientiousness ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.37$), voice Behaviour ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.47$) and sportsmanship ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.44$). Next, these were followed by courtesy ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.41$) and civic virtue ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.40$). It was also revealed that accounting graduates performed less in altruism ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.54$).

Table 4.9
Level of Job Performance among Accounting Graduates

Construct	Mean	SD	Level
Task Performance	3.61	0.50	Moderate
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	3.76	0.32	High
Conscientiousness	3.88	0.37	High
Voice Behaviour	3.86	0.47	High
Sportsmanship	3.85	0.44	High
Courtesy	3.76	0.41	High
Civic Virtue	3.76	0.40	High
Altruism	3.42	0.54	Moderate

4.7 Relationship between Accounting Graduates' Qualities and Job Performance

Pearson Correlation Analysis was carried out to examine the relationship among variables studied. This analysis attempted to answer Research Question 2: What is the relationship between Malaysian accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance?

The relationship can be found by computing the correlation coefficient. According Hair et al., (2010), the number representing the Pearson correlation is referred to as a correlation coefficient. It ranges from -1.00 to $+1.00$, with zero representing absolutely no association between the two metric variables. The larger the correlation coefficient, the stronger the linkage or level of association. A strong correlation is represented by a coefficient exceeding the value of 0.5 whereas a medium or modest correlation is when the coefficient has a value of between 0.5 and 0.2. Any coefficient possessing a value less than 0.2 is deemed as showing a weak correlation. Benny and Feldman (1985) suggested a rule of thumb, that the correlation coefficients that exceed 0.8 (very strong correlation) will likely to result in multicollinearity. Cohen (1988) has put forward a guideline on the effect sizes of the correlation coefficients in social science studies as: small effect size, $r = 0.1 - 0.29$, medium: $r = 0.30 - 0.49$, and large: $r = 0.50$. Results of the correlation analysis indicate that there is no violation of the assumption as the absolute value is between the ranges of 0.647 and 0.745 which is lower than the acceptable cut-off value of 0.8 (Hair et al., (2010)).

4.7.1 Overall Job Performance

Results of Pearson correlation examining the relationship between job performances and accounting graduates qualities were shown in Table 4.10. It was found that there was a strongest significant relationship between knowledge and job performance ($r = 0.745$, $p < 0.01$). It is followed by abilities ($r = 0.716$, $p < 0.01$) and skills ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$). Other characteristics also showed a high relationship with job performance at $r = 0.647$ and $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.10
Relationship between Accounting Graduates' Qualities and Job Performance

	Job performance	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities	Others characteristic
Job Performance	1				
Knowledge	.745**	1			
Skills	.715**	.729**	1		
Abilities	.716**	.798**	.798**	1	
Other Characteristic	.647**	.565**	.567**	.513**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

4.7.2 Task Performance

Table 4.11 summarised the results of Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationship between accounting graduates' qualities and task performance. It was found that accounting graduates' qualities have high correlation with task performance as follows: knowledge ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$); skills ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.01$); abilities ($r = 0.703$, $p < 0.01$) and other characteristics ($r = 0.647$, $p < 0.01$). The results also suggest that there were all positive relationship.

Table 4.11

Relationship between Accounting Graduates' Qualities and Task Performance

	Task performance	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities	Others characteristic
Task Performance	1				
Knowledge	.761**	1			
Skills	.718**	.729**	1		
Abilities	.703**	.798**	.798**	1	
Other Characteristic	.647**	.565**	.567**	.513**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

4.7.3 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Next, this study also seeks to examine the relationship between accounting graduates' qualities and OCB. The results were shown in Table 4.12. It was revealed that there was also a strong relationship between accounting graduates' qualities and OCB as follows: Knowledge ($r = 0.627, p < 0.01$), skills ($r = 0.615, p < 0.01$), abilities ($r = 0.630, p < 0.01$) and other characteristics ($r = 0.618, p < 0.01$).

Table 4.12

Relationship between Accounting Graduates' Qualities and OCB

	OCB	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities	Others characteristic
OCB	1				
Knowledge	.627**	1			
Skills	.615**	.729**	1		
Abilities	.630**	.798**	.798**	1	
Other Characteristic	.618**	.565**	.567**	.513**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

4.8 Overall Model

This section attempted to examine the relationship effect of graduates' qualities on job performance. Linear regression was carried to answer this question.

4.8.1 Graduates' Qualities on Job Performance

Table 4.13 summarised the multiple regression analysis to test the overall model that is the effect of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics on job performance. It was found that the four constructs explained 84.3 percent of accounting graduates' job performance ($R^2 = 0.843$, $F = 428.801$, $p < 0.01$). Among the four construct, other characteristics showed the highest effect to job performance ($B = 0.535$, $t = 21.037$, $p < 0.01$), followed by knowledge ($B = 0.231$, $t = 5.167$, $p < 0.01$), abilities ($B = 0.204$, $t = 4.154$, $p < 0.01$) and skills ($B = 0.095$, $t = 2.304$, $p < 0.05$). The result can be used to predict job performance and to solve the regression model developed in Chapter 3 as follows:

$$JPerf = \alpha + \beta_1 know + \beta_2 skill + \beta_3 ability + \beta_4 other + \varepsilon$$

$$JPerf = (-0.227) + 0.231know + 0.095skill + 0.204ability + 0.535other + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.13
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Qualities on Job Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Knowledge	.231	.045	.203	5.167	.000***
Skills	.095	.041	.091	2.304	.022**
Abilities	.204	.049	.180	4.154	.000***
Other Characteristics	.535	.025	.588	21.037	.000***
Constant			-0.227		
R^2			0.843		
F			428.801		
Sig.			0.000		

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

4.8.2 Graduates' Qualities on Task Performance

Table 4.14 summarised the multiple regression analysis to test the overall model that is the effect of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics on task performance. It was found that the four constructs explained 68.0 percent of accounting graduates' task performance ($R^2 = 0.680$, $F = 169.787$, $p < 0.01$). Among the four construct, graduates' knowledge showed the highest effect to task performance ($B = 0.0456$, $t = 6.864$, $p < 0.01$), followed by other characteristics ($B = 0.246$, $t = 6.506$, $p < 0.01$) and graduates' skills ($B = 0.244$, $t = 3.978$, $p < 0.01$). The result can be used to predict task performance and to solve the regression model developed as follows:

$$TPerf = \alpha + \beta_1 know + \beta_2 skill + \beta_3 ability + \beta_4 other + \varepsilon$$

$$TPerf = (-0.068) + 0.456know + 0.244skill + 0.101ability + 0.246other + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.14
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Qualities on Task Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Knowledge	.456	.066	.384	6.864	.000***
Skills	.244	.061	.223	3.978	.000***
Abilities	.101	.073	.085	1.378	.169
Other Characteristics	.246	.038	.260	6.506	.000***
Constant			-0.068		
R^2			0.680		
F			169.787		
Sig.			0.000		

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

4.8.3 Graduates' Qualities on OCB

Table 4.15 summarised the multiple regression analysis to test the overall model that is the effect of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics on OCB. It was found that the four constructs explained 87.8 percent of accounting graduates' task performance ($R^2 = 0.878$, $F = 575.839$, $p < 0.01$). Among the four construct, only two constructs showed the significant effect on OCB. The constructs were abilities ($B = 0.0.307$, $t = 6.411$, $p < 0.01$) and other characteristics ($B = 0.824$, $t = 33.182$, $p < 0.01$). The result can be used to predict OCB and to solve the regression model developed as follows:

$$OCB = \alpha + \beta_1 know + \beta_2 skill + \beta_3 ability + \beta_4 other + \varepsilon$$

$$OCB = (-0.385) + 0.005know + (-0.054skill) + 0.307ability + 0.824other + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.15
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Qualities on OCB

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Knowledge	.005	.044	.004	.122	.903
Skills	-.054	.040	-.046	-1.343	.180
Abilities	.307	.048	.244	6.411	.000***
Other Characteristics	.824	.025	.817	33.182	.000***
Constant			-0.385		
R^2			0.878		
F			575.839		
Sig.			0.000		

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

4.8.4 Graduates' Knowledge on Job Performance

Table 4.16 exhibits the multiple regression analysis to examine the effect of accounting graduates' knowledge on their job performance. The purpose of the analysis is to establish linear relationships between the variables to predict values of dependent variable from values of the independent variables. It is revealed that accounting Graduates' knowledge had significantly explained 64.6 percent of their job performance ($R^2 = 0.646$, $F = 29.257$, $p < 0.01$). The results also indicated that out of 20 knowledge items, only nine of them were significant to job performance, that were Business Strategy ($B = 0.082$, $t = 3.927$, $p < 0.01$), Finance ($B = 0.075$, $t = 2.943$, $p < 0.01$), Financial Accounting ($B = 0.063$, $t = 2.412$, $p < 0.05$), Information System ($B = 0.081$, $t = 3.400$, $p < 0.01$), Marketing ($B = 0.063$, $t = 2.327$, $p < 0.05$), Organisational Behaviour/Human Resource Management ($B = 0.079$, $t = 4.329$, $p < 0.01$), Research Methods ($B = 0.067$, $t = 3.848$, $p < 0.01$), Statistics/Quantitative Methods ($B = 0.072$, $t = 2.818$, $p < 0.01$) and Taxation ($B = 0.040$, $t = 2.818$, $p < 0.01$). Two items were significant at $p < 0.1$. They are Electronic Commerce ($B = 0.034$, $t = 1.725$, $p < 0.1$) and Technology Topic ($B = 0.040$, $t = 1.943$, $p < 0.1$). The other items were not significant.

Table 4.16
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Knowledge on Job Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Auditing/Assurance Services	.034	.029	.051	1.193	.234
Business Law	.005	.020	.011	.269	.788
Business Strategy	.082	.021	.150	3.927	.000***
Electronic Commerce	.034	.020	.068	1.725	.086*
Ethics	.002	.013	.005	.141	.888
Finance	.075	.025	.120	2.943	.004***
Financial Accounting	.063	.026	.095	2.412	.016**
Global/International Business	.016	.029	.024	.554	.580
Government Accounting	-.003	.023	-.006	-.143	.886
Information Systems	.081	.024	.139	3.400	.001***
Managerial Accounting	.027	.029	.039	.938	.349
Management	.037	.023	.072	1.594	.112
Marketing	.063	.027	.111	2.327	.021**
Organisational Behaviour/HR Management	.079	.018	.170	4.329	.000***
Research Methods	.067	.017	.151	3.848	.000***
Statistics/Quantitative Methods	.072	.022	.138	3.288	.001***
Taxation	.072	.026	.115	2.818	.005***
Technology Topics	.040	.021	.078	1.943	.053*
Practical Training	-.013	.019	-.027	-.683	.495
R ²	0.646				
F	29.257				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

Next, regression analysis to examine the effect of Accounting Graduates' knowledge on task performance is illustrated in Table 4.17. It is found that accounting graduates' knowledge is 65.8 percent on task performance ($R^2 = 0.658$, $F = 30.886$, $p < 0.01$). The result also indicates that 11 items on knowledge are associated with task performance. They are Auditing/Assurance Services ($B = 0.085$, $t = 2.893$, $p < 0.01$), Business Strategy ($B = 0.053$, $t = 2.468$, $p < 0.05$), Finance ($B = 0.085$, $t = 3.257$, $p < 0.01$), Financial Accounting ($B = 0.080$, $t = 3.001$, $p < 0.01$), Information Systems ($B = 0.057$, $t = 2.356$, $p < 0.05$), Management ($B = 0.067$, $t = 2.814$, $p < 0.01$), Marketing ($B = 0.073$, $t = 2.636$, $p < 0.01$), Organisational Behaviour/Human Resource Management ($B = 0.055$, $t = 2.949$,

$p < 0.01$), Research Methods ($B = 0.088$, $t = 4.930$, $p < 0.01$), Statistics/Quantitative Methods ($B = 0.055$, $t = 2.466$, $p < 0.05$) and Taxation ($B = 0.071$, $t = 2.709$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.17

Effect of Accounting Graduates' Knowledge on Task Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Auditing/Assurance Services	.085	.029	.120	2.893	.004***
Business Law	.000	.020	-.001	-.019	.985
Business Strategy	.053	.021	.092	2.468	.014**
Electronic Commerce	.027	.020	.051	1.311	.191
Ethics	.004	.013	.010	.282	.778
Finance	.085	.026	.130	3.257	.001***
Financial Accounting	.080	.027	.116	3.001	.003***
Global/International Business	.026	.030	.037	.874	.383
Government Accounting	.029	.023	.048	1.261	.208
Information Systems	.057	.024	.095	2.356	.019**
Managerial Accounting	.020	.029	.028	.685	.494
Management	.067	.024	.126	2.814	.005**
Marketing	.073	.028	.123	2.636	.009***
Organisational Behaviour/HR Management	.055	.019	.114	2.949	.003***
Research Methods	.088	.018	.190	4.930	.000***
Statistics/Quantitative Methods	.055	.022	.101	2.465	.014**
Taxation	.071	.026	.108	2.709	.007***
Technology Topics	.009	.021	.016	.407	.684
Practical Training	.005	.020	.010	.246	.805
R ²	0.658				
F	30.886				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

Effect of accounting Graduates knowledge on OCB is summarised in Table 4.18. 50.9 percent of the OCB is successfully explained by knowledge ($R^2 = 0.509$, $F = 16.621$, $p < 0.01$). Eight of the items are significant. They are Business Strategy ($B = 0.112$, $t = 4.075$, $p < 0.05$), Information Systems ($B = 0.104$, $t = 3.356$, $p < 0.01$), Organisational Behaviour/Human Resource Management ($B = 0.103$, $t = 4.315$, $p < 0.01$), Research Methods ($B = 0.046$, $t = 2.023$, $p < 0.05$), Statistics/Quantitative Methods ($B = 0.088$, $t =$

3.100, $p < 0.01$) and Taxation ($B = 0.074$, $t = 2.188$, $p < 0.05$), Technology Topics ($B = 0.072$, $t = 2.656$, $p < 0.01$) and Finance ($B = 0.065$, $t = 1.949$, $p < 0.1$).

Table 4.18
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Knowledge on OCB

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Auditing/Assurance Services	-.017	.037	-.022	-.444	.658
Business Law	.011	.026	.020	.426	.670
Business Strategy	.112	.027	.183	4.075	.000***
Electronic Commerce	.042	.026	.075	1.612	.108
Ethics	.001	.016	.000	-.006	.995
Finance	.065	.033	.093	1.949	.052*
Financial Accounting	.045	.034	.062	1.338	.182
Global/International Business	.006	.038	.008	.162	.872
Government Accounting	-.036	.030	-.055	-1.209	.228
Information Systems	.104	.031	.162	3.356	.001***
Managerial Accounting	.034	.037	.044	.899	.369
Management	.007	.030	.012	.232	.817
Marketing	.053	.035	.084	1.495	.136
Organisational Behaviour/HR Management	.103	.024	.199	4.315	.000***
Research Methods	.046	.023	.094	2.023	.044**
Statistics/Quantitative Methods	.088	.028	.153	3.100	.002***
Taxation	.074	.034	.105	2.188	.029**
Technology Topics	.072	.027	.125	2.656	.008***
Practical Training	-.031	.025	-.058	-1.239	.216
R^2	0.509	.037	-.022	-.444	.658
F	16.621	.026	.020	.426	.670
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

4.8.5 Graduates' Skills on Job Performance

As exhibit in table 4.19, accounting Graduates' skills were found to have less effect on job performance compared to knowledge. However, skills also had a significant effect on job performance accounted for more than 50 percent of job performance ($R^2 = 0.585$, $F = 28.969$, $p < 0.01$). The results also indicated that there was a significant relationship between oral communication skills ($B = 0.108$, $t = 4.647$, $p < 0.01$), written

communication skills ($B = 0.113$, $t = 3.336$, $p < 0.01$), interpersonal skills ($B = 0.104$, $t = 5.255$, $p < 0.01$) and programming skills ($B = 0.060$, $t = 2.240$, $p < 0.05$). Other items also significantly were able to predict job performance as follows: design web based application ($B = 0.094$, $t = 3.866$, $p < 0.01$), presentation skills ($B = 0.094$, $t = 3.123$, $p < 0.01$) and leadership skills ($B = 0.102$, $t = 3.272$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.19
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Skills on Job Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Accounting Application System (eg. UBS)	.009	.029	.014	.324	.746
Oral communication skills	.108	.023	.194	4.647	.000***
written communication skills	.113	.034	.167	3.336	.001***
Solving problems	-.022	.034	-.033	-.647	.518
Interpersonal Skill	.104	.020	.213	5.255	.000***
Report Writing	-.003	.034	-.004	-.079	.937
Programming Skills	.060	.027	.104	2.240	.026**
Design Web Based Applications	.094	.024	.183	3.866	.000***
Decision Making	.052	.034	.076	1.548	.123
Presentation Skill	.094	.030	.146	3.123	.002***
Listening Skill	.029	.031	.045	.942	.347
Supervising Skill	-.031	.034	-.045	-.900	.369
Negotiating Skill	.036	.030	.057	1.212	.226
Leadership Skill	.102	.031	.158	3.272	.001***
Critical Thinking	.013	.026	.023	.521	.603
R ²	0.585				
F	28.969				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

Accounting graduates' skills were accounted with 58.4 percent of job performance in term of task performance ($R^2 = 0.584$, $F = 28.778$, $p < 0.01$) (refer Table 4.20).

Accounting Application System (eg. UBS) ($B = 0.063$, $t = 2.050$, $p < 0.05$), Oral communication skills ($B = 0.129$, $t = 5.294$, $p < 0.01$), Written communication skills ($B = 0.102$, $t = 2.883$, $p < 0.01$), Interpersonal skills ($B = 0.064$, $t = 3.071$, $p < 0.01$), Design Web Based Applications ($B = 0.112$, $t = 4.372$, $p < 0.01$), Presentation skills ($B = 0.068$, $t = 3.123$, $p < 0.01$) and Leadership skills ($B = 0.102$, $t = 3.272$, $p < 0.01$).

= 3.786, $p < 0.01$), Leadership skills ($B = 0.126$, $t = 3.864$, $p < 0.01$) and Decision Making ($B = 0.068$, $t = 1.924$, $p < 0.1$) were found to have a significant relationship with task performance. The other items were not significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4.20
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Skills on Task Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Accounting Application System (eg. UBS)	.063	.031	.087	2.050	.041**
Oral communication skills	.129	.024	.222	5.294	.000***
Written communication skills	.102	.036	.145	2.883	.004***
Solving problems	-.025	.035	-.036	-.706	.481
Interpersonal Skill	.064	.021	.124	3.071	.002***
Report Writing	.008	.036	.011	.211	.833
Programming Skills	.041	.028	.068	1.459	.146
Design Web Based Applications	.112	.026	.207	4.372	.000***
Decision Making	.068	.035	.095	1.924	.055*
Presentation Skill	.119	.031	.178	3.786	.000***
Listening Skill	.012	.033	.017	.359	.720
Supervising Skill	-.037	.035	-.053	-1.053	.293
Negotiating Skill	.046	.031	.069	1.470	.143
Leadership Skill	.126	.033	.187	3.864	.000***
Critical Thinking	-.011	.027	-.019	-.430	.668
	R ²	0.584			
	F	28.778			
	Sig.	0.000			

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

The regression analysis result to examine the effect of accounting graduates' skills on OCB is illustrated in Table 4.21. It is found that skills represented 46.0 percent for accounting graduates' OCB according to employers ($R^2 = 0.460$, $F = 17.511$, $p < 0.01$). Again, communication skills such as oral communication skills ($B = 0.087$, $t = 2.970$, $p < 0.01$) and written communication skills are found to be a significant predictor on OCB. Other items acted as significant predictor on OCB. These include Interpersonal skills ($B = 0.145$, $t = 5.769$, $p < 0.01$), Programming skills ($B = 0.079$, $t = 2.336$, $p < 0.05$), Design

Web Based Applications ($B = 0.077$, $t = 2.497$, $p < 0.05$), Leadership skills ($B = 0.078$, $t = 1.980$, $p < 0.05$) and Presentation Skills ($B = 0.069$, $t = 1.808$, $p < 0.1$).

Table 4.21
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Skills on OCB

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Accounting Application System (eg. UBS)	-.044	.037	-.057	-1.181	.238
Oral communication skills	.087	.029	.142	2.970	.003***
Written communication skills	.124	.043	.165	2.892	.004***
Solving problems	-.019	.043	-.026	-.440	.660
Interpersonal Skill	.145	.025	.266	5.769	.000***
Report Writing	-.013	.043	-.017	-.299	.765
Programming Skills	.079	.034	.124	2.336	.020**
Design Web Based Applications	.077	.031	.135	2.497	.013
Decision Making	.037	.043	.048	.857	.392
Presentation Skill	.069	.038	.097	1.808	.072*
Listening Skill	.047	.040	.065	1.193	.234
Supervising Skill	-.024	.043	-.032	-.553	.581
Negotiating Skill	.027	.038	.037	.701	.484
Leadership Skill	.078	.039	.109	1.980	.049**
Critical Thinking	.038	.032	.060	1.179	.239
	R^2	0.460			
	F	17.511			
	Sig.	0.000			

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

4.8.6 Graduates' Abilities on Job Performance

Accounting graduates' abilities are found to influence job performance for 75.5 percent ($R^2 = 0.755$, $F = 55.706$, $p < 0.01$) (refer Table 4.22). This result indicated that accounting graduate's abilities had higher influence on their job performance compared to their knowledge and skills. The significant abilities include: Ability to apply theoretical knowledge ($B = 0.070$, $t = 3.139$, $p < 0.01$), Management of risk ($B = 0.084$, $t = 4.164$, $p < 0.01$), Work Prioritisation, ($B = 0.062$, $t = 3.013$, $p < 0.01$), Managing subordinates ($B = 0.079$, $t = 3.744$, $p < 0.01$), Able to work in group/teams, ($B = 0.043$, $t = 2.005$, $p < 0.05$),

Creative Thinking (B = 0.136, t = 8.276, $p < 0.01$), Ability to do research (B = 0.158, t = 8.102, $p < 0.01$), ability to adapt to new work environment (B = 0.116, t = 4.971, $p < 0.01$) and perform technological assessment and re-evaluation (B = 0.045, t = 1.893, $p < 0.1$).

Table 4.22
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Abilities on Job Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Ability to apply analytical techniques	.019	.026	.026	.742	.459
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge	.070	.022	.107	3.139	.002**
Management of risk	.084	.020	.137	4.164	.000***
Managing complex and ambiguous situation	.010	.012	.025	.832	.406
Working across functional boundaries	-.002	.024	-.004	-.098	.922
Identification of new technological opportunity	.015	.024	.026	.606	.545
Integration of technology and business strategy	-.025	.021	-.044	-1.189	.235
Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation	.045	.024	.070	1.893	.059*
Time Management	-.013	.010	-.038	-1.291	.198
Work Prioritisation	.062	.021	.106	3.013	.003***
Critical Thinking	.009	.024	.013	.349	.727
Managing subordinates	.079	.021	.123	3.744	.000***
Able to work independently	-.003	.027	-.004	-.099	.921
Able to work in group/teams	.043	.022	.068	2.005	.046**
Thinking creatively	.136	.016	.274	8.276	.000***
Ability to do research	.158	.019	.319	8.102	.000***
Ability to adapt to new work environment	.116	.023	.203	4.971	.000***
	R ²	0.755			
	F	55.706			
	Sig.	0.000			

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

Next, Table 4.23 exhibits the results of regression analysis to investigate the effect of accounting graduates' abilities on task performance. It is found that the abilities represented 62.4 percent of task performance ($R^2 = 0.624$, $F = 28.272$, $p < 0.01$). 10 items are found to have a significant effect to task performance. They are the ability to apply analytical techniques (B = 0.087, t = 5.254, $p < 0.05$), ability to apply theoretical knowledge (B = 0.089, t = 3.942, $p < 0.01$), management of risk (B = 0.084, t = 3.215, $p < 0.01$), time performance (B = -0.012, t = -2.690, $p < 0.05$), critical thinking (B = 0.093, t

= 3.490, $p < 0.01$), managing subordinates ($B = 0.064$, $t = 2.000$, $p < 0.05$), able to work independently, ($B = 0.079$, $t = 2.915$, $p < 0.01$), Thinking creatively ($B = 0.090$, $t = 3.215$, $p < 0.01$), ability to do research ($B = 0.109$, $t = 5.107$, $p < 0.01$) and Ability to adapt to new work environment ($B = 0.090$, $t = 3.565$, $p < 0.01$). The other items are found to have no significant effect on task performance.

Table 4.23
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Abilities on Task Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Ability to apply analytical techniques	.087	.035	.110	2.524	.012**
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge	.089	.029	.130	3.042	.003***
Management of risk	.084	.026	.131	3.215	.001***
Managing complex and ambiguous situation	.006	.016	.015	.396	.693
Working across functional boundaries	.033	.031	.054	1.059	.290
Identification of new technological opportunity	-.010	.032	-.017	-.319	.750
Integration of technology and business strategy	-.040	.027	-.068	-1.474	.142
Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation	.034	.032	.051	1.070	.285
Time Management	-.102	.038	-.135	-2.690	.008***
Work Prioritisation	-.013	.013	-.036	-.988	.324
Critical Thinking	.093	.027	.153	3.490	.001***
Managing subordinates	.064	.032	.092	2.000	.046**
Able to work independently	.079	.027	.119	2.915	.004***
Able to work in group/teams	.050	.035	.068	1.414	.158
Thinking creatively	.090	.028	.136	3.215	.001***
Ability to do research	.109	.021	.211	5.107	.000***
Ability to adapt to new work environment	.090	.025	.174	3.565	.000***
R ²	0.624				
F	28.272				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

Table 4.24 illustrated the effect of accounting graduates abilities on OCB. Abilities were found to have high influenced on OCB. This is represented with 76.2 percent ($R^2 = 0.762$, $F = 54.402$, $p < 0.01$). However, only six items are found to have a significant association with OCB. They are ability to apply theoretical knowledge ($B = 0.063$, $t = 2.572$,

$p < 0.05$), management of risk ($B = 0.083$, $t = 3.776$, $p < 0.01$), perform technological assessment & re-evaluation ($B = 0.086$, $t = 3.173$, $p < 0.01$), Able to work independently ($B = 0.083$, $t = 3.594$, $p < 0.01$), ability to do research ($B = 0.153$, $t = 8.455$, $p < 0.01$), ability to adapt to new work environment ($B = 0.223$, $t = 10.428$, $p < 0.01$) and critical thinking ($B = 0.038$, $t = 1.665$, $p < 0.1$).

Table 4.24
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Abilities on OCB

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Ability to apply analytical techniques	-.027	.029	-.032	-.927	.355
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge	.063	.025	.087	2.572	.011**
Management of risk	.083	.022	.123	3.776	.000***
Managing complex and ambiguous situation	.009	.014	.021	.695	.488
Working across functional boundaries	-.034	.026	-.051	-1.273	.204
Identification of new technological opportunity	.035	.027	.056	1.307	.192
Integration of technology and business strategy	-.008	.023	-.014	-.371	.711
Perform technological assessment & re-evaluation	.086	.027	.121	3.173	.002***
Time Management	-.019	.032	-.024	-.604	.546
Work Prioritisation	-.015	.011	-.040	-1.356	.176
Critical Thinking	.038	.023	.058	1.665	.097*
Managing subordinates	-.028	.027	-.037	-1.016	.310
Able to work independently	.083	.023	.116	3.594	.000***
Able to work in group/teams	-.035	.030	-.044	-1.162	.246
Thinking creatively	.001	.024	.001	.042	.967
Ability to do research	.153	.018	.278	8.455	.000***
Ability to adapt to new work environment	.223	.021	.405	10.428	.000***
R ²	0.762				
F	54.50				
	2				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

4.8.7 Graduates' Other Characteristics on Job Performance

The next table (Table 4.25) exhibits the multiple regression analysis to examine the effect of accounting graduates' other characteristics on their job performance. It is revealed that accounting graduates' other characteristics had the highest effect on job performance

compared to knowledge, skills and abilities ($R^2=0.778$, $F = 185.213$, $p<0.01$). All of the other characteristics were significant to measure job performance as follows: Self-confidence ($B = 0.165$, $t = 10.135$, $p<0.01$), Assertiveness ($B = 0.169$, $t = 11.260$, $p<0.01$), decisiveness ($B = 0.109$, $t = 6.986$, $p<0.01$), flexibility ($B = 0.180$, $t = 9.729$, $p<0.01$), judgement ($B = 0.030$, $t = 2.106$, $p<0.05$) and stress tolerance ($B = 0.114$, $t = 7.060$, $p<0.01$).

Table 4.25
Effect of Accounting Graduates' Other Characteristic on Job Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Self-confidence	.165	.016	.299	10.135	.000***
Assertiveness	.169	.015	.321	11.260	.000***
Decisiveness	.109	.016	.209	6.986	.000***
Flexibility	.180	.018	.309	9.729	.000***
Judgment	.030	.014	.060	2.106	.036**
Stress tolerance	.114	.016	.226	7.060	.000***
R^2	0.778				
F	185.213				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p<0.01$; ** $p<0.05$

Next, Table 4.26 illustrated the result of regression analysis to examine the effect of accounting graduates other characteristic on task performance. Employers perceived that other characteristics significantly affected task performance with 49.9 percent ($R^2 = 0.499$, $F = 57.782$, $p<0.01$). Five of the items significantly found to be able to predict task performance. They are self-confidence ($B = 0.158$, $t = 5.806$, $p<0.01$), assertiveness ($B = 0.132$, $t = 5.609$, $p<0.01$), decisiveness ($B = 0.093$, $t = 3.787$, $p<0.01$), flexibility ($B = 0.178$, $t = 6.157$, $p<0.01$) and stress tolerance ($B = 0.072$, $t = 2.848$, $p<0.01$). As seen in the table, only judgment failed to illustrate task performance ($B = -0.014$, $t = -0.621$, $p>0.05$).

Table 4.26

Effect of Accounting Graduates' Other Characteristic on Task Performance

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Self-confidence	.148	.026	.257	5.806	.000***
Assertiveness	.132	.023	.240	5.609	.000***
Decisiveness	.093	.024	.170	3.787	.000***
Flexibility	.178	.029	.294	6.157	.000***
Judgment	-.014	.023	-.027	-.621	.535
Stress tolerance	.072	.025	.137	2.848	.005***
R ²	0.499				
F	57.782				
Sig.	0.000				

*** $p < 0.01$

Table 4.27 is the result of regression analysis to describe the effect of other characteristics on OCB. It was found that other characteristics significantly explained OCB with 87.8 percent ($R^2 = 0.878$, $F = 380.588$, $p < 0.01$). All other characteristics have significantly acted as predictor on OCB as follows: Self-confidence ($B = 0.182$, $t = 13.596$, $p < 0.01$), Assertiveness ($B = 0.206$, $t = 16.710$, $p < 0.01$), Decisiveness ($B = 0.126$, $t = 9.782$, $p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($B = 0.181$, $t = 11.940$, $p < 0.01$), Judgment ($B = 0.075$, $t = 6.305$, $p < 0.01$) and Stress tolerance ($B = 0.156$, $t = 11.752$, $p < 0.01$)

Table 4.27

Effect of Accounting Graduates' Abilities on OCB

	β	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
<i>Self-confidence</i>	.182	.013	.298	13.596	.000***
<i>Assertiveness</i>	.206	.012	.353	16.710	.000***
<i>Decisiveness</i>	.126	.013	.217	9.783	.000***
<i>Flexibility</i>	.181	.015	.281	11.940	.000***
<i>Judgment</i>	.075	.012	.134	6.305	.000***
<i>Stress tolerance</i>	.156	.013	.279	11.752	.000***
R ²			0.878		
F			380.588		
Sig.			0.000		

*** $p < 0.01$

4.9 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Section 4.7 and Section 4.8 had successfully tested all the hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. Table 4.28 summarised the results of hypotheses test. Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression were used to test H1 to H4. To support the hypotheses, the significant (p) must less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) at the probability level of 5 percent. Hence, the results had successfully supported most of the hypotheses developed and only failed to support three hypotheses. The rejected hypotheses were H1b, HH2b and H3a Only the Results indicated that all of the significant value (p) was less than 0.05. These results had successfully supported all the hypotheses.

Table 4.28

Summary of Hypotheses Test

Hypothesis	Reference	Result	Summary
H1: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and job performance	Table 4.13	B = 0.231***	Supported
<i>H1a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and task performance</i>	Table 4.14	B=0.456***	Supported
<i>H1b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' knowledge and OCB</i>	Table 4.15	B=0.005	Not supported
H2: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and job performance	Table 4.13	B=0.095**	Supported
<i>H2a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and task performance</i>	Table 4.14	B=0.244***	Supported
<i>H2b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' skills and OCB</i>	Table 4.15	B=-0.054**	Not supported
H3: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and job performance	Table 4.13	B=0.204***	Supported
<i>H3a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and task performance</i>	Table 4.14	B=0.101	Not supported
<i>H3b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' abilities and OCB</i>	Table 4.15	B=0.307***	Supported
H4: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and job performance	Table 4.13	B=0.535***	Supported
<i>H4a: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and task performance</i>	Table 4.14	B=0.246***	Supported
<i>H4b: There is a significant relationship between graduates' other characteristics and OCB</i>	Table 4.15	B=0.824***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.01$

4.10 Chapter Summary

In this Chapter, the analysis of the data and results through statistical testing were presented as proposed in the previous chapter. Chapter 5 discusses on the findings and the implication of theories. Policy making and future research recommendation are presented as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

In this final chapter, the major findings of study were discussed with regard to previous findings in the other studies. This study aims to better understand the current accounting graduates' qualities and their job performance. The findings of the study were further discussed based on the research questions and the literature reviewed. The objectives of the study were to determine the relationship between accounting graduates' qualities in term of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) with job performance. This chapter also discusses the dimension of independent variables that influences job performance and highlights the relationship of this study with other studies. Suggestions for improving accounting graduates' qualities and job performance were also presented. Implications of the findings were introduced. Recommendations for further research were presented. Finally, the chapter ends with conclusion of the study.

5.1 Overview of the Study

This study focused on the relationship between accounting graduates' qualities (KSAO) with job performance. The other objective was to determine the level of accounting graduates qualities and their job performance from the view of the employers.

This study used a sample from the auditing firms in Malaysia provided by the Malaysian Institute of Accountant (MIA) 2011. The purpose of selecting the respondents from the

auditing firms was because the job scope of the employees in the firm is related to the accounting field. The employees from auditing firms were required to audit the financial statement from various types and sizes of the organisation. Hence, the employees were exposed to the various types of organisations. The unit of analysis was the organisation with key top partners or executives as respondent to the distributed questionnaires. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed with the minimum required sample of 325. The respond rate was 81.25 percent of distributed questionnaires. The data were analyzed using multiple types of statistical analysis, such as Pearson correlation and multiple regressions in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

To restate some of the crucial information of the research, broad categories of accounting graduates' qualities with specific knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics identified for each were provided to participants to help them rate on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 based on their perception of the need for the qualities to be possessed by the accounting graduates. The employers were also asked to indicate their perception towards accounting graduates' job performance measured by two dimensions which include task performance and organisational citizenship Behaviour (OCB). The instrument used in this study was adopted from previous studies by Albrecht and Sack (2000) and Normala (2004).

5.2 Summary of Findings

Statistical finding from the exploration of variable were described in Chapter Four of this study. Presented below are the main findings of the study that are considered most important for subsequent discussion.

5.2.1 Level of Qualities and Job Performance of Malaysian Accounting Graduates

The first Research Question (RQ1) was to examine the extent of the level of qualities (KSAO) and job performance of Malaysia accounting graduates.

5.2.1.1 Level of Accounting Graduates' Qualities

The results clearly indicated that accounting graduates were well equipped with the following knowledge such as financial accounting, managerial accounting and auditing/assurance services, global/international business, taxation, finance, government accounting and information system. However, the following knowledge such as practical training, business law, research methods, business strategy, technology topics, ethics and economics should be given more emphasis for the graduates.

The results of this study support the findings of the previous research (Borzi & Mills, 2001; Bennett et al., 2002; Cranmer, 2006; Chen et al., 2008; and DiGabriele, 2008) and expand our understanding of the Malaysia accountants' perceptions and employers toward accounting graduates in Malaysia. Accounting educators should consider the qualities that are perceived to be important by practicing accountants to be incorporated into the accounting curriculum. Specifically, this study provides evidence that

accountants and employers perceived alike on the importance of qualities that must be incorporated in the curriculum.

Employers also indicated that accounting graduates showed high skills in accounting application system, written and oral communication skills, negotiating skills and decision skill. Accounting graduates also showed high skills in report writing, supervising skill, presentation skill, solving problem and critical thinking. However, the employers believe that accounting graduates lack of interpersonal skill.

The study also found that employers perceived that the level of accounting graduates' abilities were high, especially in applying analytical techniques, critical thinking and able to work independently. Accounting graduates also show their ability in managing subordinates, ability to apply theoretical knowledge, perform technological assessment and re-evaluation, able to work in group and integration of technology and business strategy.

The last qualities examine in the study was other characteristics. This study revealed that accounting graduates were well equipped with assertiveness, flexibility, self-confidence and decisiveness, but lack judgement and stress tolerance.

The results of descriptive analyses were similar to the findings of previous studies that examined competencies for accounting graduates programs and the industry (Borzi & Mills, 2001; Bennett et al., 2002; Cranmer, 2006; Chen et al., 2008; and DiGabriele, 2008). Bennett et al. (2002) studied the accounting practitioners in US and found that

employers had varying understandings of the importance of generic skills at the workplace. Borzi and Mills (2001) found the importance of communication skills for the graduates. Chen et al. (2008) stated that Taiwanese companies preferred candidates who showed the greatest match between goals and values of the candidate and those of the organisation and posed the highest generic qualities.

The findings of the study addressed that accounting graduates possessed high quality in most of the qualities attributes, suggesting that the effort made by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) had met the objectives. Among the effort made by MOHE is the *Laporan Hala Tuju 2 Program Perakaunan* (2007). The main objective of this report was to alter the quality of accounting program in local higher institution to meet the global standards. A key objective of the report is to produce graduates who can integrate and apply multidisciplinary knowledge to problem-solving once they start working. Other than that, International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) have undertaken efforts to revise and redraft its suite of eight International Education Standards (IESs) for IFAC member bodies and interested stakeholders in professional accounting education. The revision of IESs main objective is to develop competent professional accountants, which focussed on knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitude.

5.2.1.2 Level of Job Performance

Job performance is referred as Behaviour of what employees produce (outcome) (Aguinis, 2007) and is measured using two dimensions: task performance and OCB. Task performance or also known as work performance refers to the specific activities required by the task or job description (Motowidlo, 2006). OCB is defined as activities that exceed the job requirement and contribute to the success of the organisation (Finkelstein, 2006) and a set of discretionary workplace Behaviours that exceed the basic job requirement.

This study revealed that employers perceived that the level of job performance performed by accounting graduates in their firms were at the moderate level. However, employers indicated that the performance in OCB was higher especially in conscientiousness, voice Behaviour, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. It can be concluded that accounting graduates had failed to shows the expected performance in completing their task. According to William (2002), the opportunity to use different qualities may not be perceived favorably by the employees. One plausible explanation for this is that accounting graduates, who are exposed to other experiences, may also have the opportunity to perform different tasks at work.

Given the fact that this study used supervisory-rating on job performance, it is most likely that accounting graduates who have the ability to use various skills at work would be more favorable. Chiu and Chen (2005) revealed a significant influence of skills variety and supervisory-ratings on performance which are attributable to the perception and evaluation made by the employers. Employers perceive employees who use different skills as more efficient and conversant in performing their task (Chiu & Chen, 2005).

5.2.2 Relationship between Accounting Graduates' Qualities (KSAO) and Job Performance

The findings of the study addressed the hypotheses developed for RQ2, which sought to determine whether or not there was a relationship between accounting graduates qualities and job performance. This study found strong association between KSAO and job performance and its dimensions.

This finding is parallel with Chiu and Chen (2005) which stated strong relationship between qualities of the employees with job performance. This indicates that the variety of qualities is perceived as a favourable job performance attribute because employees have more opportunities to utilise their knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics at work. Those who use different KSAO at work may also have performed a wide range of tasks and this would be recognised by the employers (Chiu and Chen, 2005).

Furthermore, employees performing multiple tasks would be highly skilled and efficient in doing their job (Chiu & Chen, 2006). This would yield a better level of job performance evaluation given by the employers.

5.2.2.1 Knowledge

The analysis of the data collected showed that the results of the multiple regression yield a significant effect ($p < 0.01$) of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics on task performance and OCB as well as on overall job performance (Refer Table 4.12 to

Table 4.24). The results indicated that accounting graduates with higher knowledge in business strategy, finance, financial accounting, information system, marketing, organisational Behaviour/human resource management, research methods, statistics/quantitative methods and taxation will show better performance to the firms.

5.2.2.2 Skills

The accounting graduates who were evaluated having high job performance were also found to have good communication skills, interpersonal skills, programming skills, design web based application, presentation skills and leadership skills. These varieties of qualities were found to be crucial and as reiterated by KSAO; these attributes must be available and perform well by the accounting graduates.

Hesketh (2000) and DiGabriele (2008) pointed similar outcomes of accounting graduates to show strong ability in critical thinking, unstructured problem solving, investigative flexibility, analytical proficiency, and legal knowledge which are important skills required of accountants. Kerby and Romine (2009) stressed on the communication aspects in course content, suggesting outcomes that are useful skills which employers want, while Du-Babcock (2006) emphasised the teaching of business communication theory and models without associating application materials is inadequate which will then lead students not being capable of applying communication skills in the future. Other studies like Bridges (2000), Chen et al. (2008); and Holmes (2001) found that interpersonal skills, oral communication, and work experience to be key criteria to perform in their job, with motivation being weighted more heavily than work experience for hiring recommendations. Additionally, they found the other required qualities were

interpersonal and verbal communication skills. This study also supports Bennett et al. (2002).

5.2.2.3 Abilities

Next, the abilities that were found to affect the job performance were ability to apply theoretical, management of risk, work prioritization, managing subordinates, able to work in group/teams, thinking creatively, ability to do research and ability to adapt to new work environment. Chen et al. (2008), Bennett et al. (2002), Bridges (2000) and Holmes (2001) agreed that accounting graduates must be confident communicators, good team players, critical thinkers, problem solvers and in addition, to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative people capable of initiating and responding to change.

5.2.2.4 Other Characteristics

Lastly, other important characteristics needed to increase job performance were also identified. They are self-confidence, assertiveness, decisiveness, flexibility, judgement and stress tolerance. This finding is similar to the study by Bennett et al. (2002). Bennett et al. (2002) found that employers and employees alike had varying understandings of the importance of generic skills in the workplace. Other findings (Bridges, 2000; Holmes, 2001) emphasise that employers stated the needs for graduates to be able to function in the workplace, be confident communicators, good team players, good judgment, decisiveness, flexibility, problem solvers and, in addition, to be adaptive, adaptable and transformative people capable of initiating and responding to change.

5.3 Implication and Recommendation

The implications arising from the results of the data analysis for research question are that additional research would be required to determine the areas of specific KSAO that the academician should emphasise when developing the curriculum for accounting degree programs. In addition, such responsibilities fall on professionals and practitioners to provide educators with necessary valuable information that the individuals would need in order to compete and be successful in the career.

The result of research question one, supports the 'Competency Theory'. Competency model describes the particular combination of knowledge, skills, and characteristics needed to effectively perform a role in an organisation and is used as a human resource tool for selection, training and development, appraisal, and succession planning (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999), written description of the competencies required for fully successful or exemplary performance in a job category, work team, department, division, or organisation (Dubois et al., 2004), and the cognitive, affective, Behavioural and motivational characteristics and dispositions of a person which enables him or her to perform well in a specific situations (Ley, 2006).

In this case, without the specific and the combination of the qualities listed in the theory, the employees, that are the accounting graduates could not perform well in the career as demanded and expected by the employers. The demands from the accounting degree programs would not be relevant to its industry, and therefore, individuals entering the industry with these graduate degrees would not be rewarded financially or otherwise. For

example, to ensure value of these programs in the industry, educators must rely accounting practitioners to provide input in the development of the competency areas required for the accounting graduates, prior to the development of these programs. Also, without the support of the accounting practitioners and professionals, the accounting programs will be ineffective as predicted by the Competency Theory which ultimately will result in failure. In addition, if the industry does not acknowledge the accounting graduates because the competencies do not satisfy or meet their needs, individuals will not be rewarded for their efforts which will create an even bigger challenge to educational institutions for the survival of the programs.

Another challenge to accounting practitioners and professionals is their willingness to articulate their competency needs or requirement and work closely with educators so that the competencies provided in the curriculum of these graduate programs aligns with their needs and demands. The close relationship between accounting practitioners and professionals and educators in this process would indicate true commitment to the industry which, ultimately, would benefit both the industry and educational institutions.

Historically, individuals interested in becoming professional accountant developed their exceptional knowledge and skills by participating in apprenticeship programs and working closely with and mirroring the professionals, an approach that dominated the industry for many years. However, the global competitive nature of the industry today and the knowledge society we are competing in requires constant update of our qualities in order to compete. As Mazarr (2005) eloquently articulated, the fates of individuals and

nations are determined by education in a knowledge society and that learning is crucial to the fate of mankind today.

Lastly, researcher anticipates that this study would potentially:

- a) Add to the knowledge base of competencies needed in the accounting career;
- b) Contribute to early literature and research on accounting degree programs; and
- c) Provide educators with valuable insight in developing the curriculum for future accounting graduates.

Additional work is needed to convert the competencies into courses and a complete curriculum.

The findings of this study are expected to be of significant value to all stakeholders of the industries. Particularly, the findings of this study will be valuable to academicians who are interested adding such degree program to their offerings. In addition, these findings would be valuable to practitioners and professionals who would have the burden of determining the usefulness of the programs and the value of individuals entering the industry. This study was intended to trigger dialogue about issues pertaining to accounting graduates, and the expectations of stakeholders in the industry about the competencies provided in the curriculum. Therefore, the researcher anticipates that this study is the beginning of several future investigations and recommends future scholarly studies to be pursued. Further investigations are required into the specific qualities needed for each of the broad categories of competencies identified. Also, an examination

into the competencies provided in the accounting degree programs and the lack of specific qualities or insufficient emphasis in specific areas may help strengthen the argument for the development of the program.

The results of the study suggest that the perspectives of individuals currently working in the industry with an accounting graduate would provide valuable insight into additional qualities needed to succeed. Therefore, these individuals should be included in future studies. Finally, the results also indicate that knowledge in the areas of human resources management, marketing management, financial and accounting management, information technology, communication and leadership skills are relevant to all accounting graduates. However, what would be unique to the accounting graduates would be the specific qualities identified and assigned to each of them. This finding is consistent with some of previous studies (Chen et al., 2008; Bennett et al. 2002; Bridges, 2000 and Holmes, 2001) which indicated that managers placed highest importance competency areas such as human resources management and financial management.

It is recommended that the curriculum accounting programs should include all of the broad competencies provided in the study. However, it is recommended that further investigation be conducted on specific qualities areas. It is also recommended that an examination of international programs in accounting programs (if any exist) may be useful in determining additional qualities.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Research

Based on the research results and discussion, this study has paved several suggestions for future research.

- a) The sample of the study could be extended to a larger population, for instance other types of organisation and sectors. This could possible be more meaningful to grasp some understanding and knowledge of the empirical linkages of all variables of interest in this study.
- b) Expanding the population to different groups of employers, sectors and employees; for instance, management and professional groups, other industrial, banking or government sectors and employees from IPTA, IPTS and overseas. This could enhance the understanding on how the accounting graduates possessed the qualities and how they perform their job in comparison to various group.
- c) Future studies also should incorporated other predictors of job performance because this Behavioural outcomes is attributed to many factors, not limited to the qualities of the employers. In fact, there are many other situational predictors of job performance that should be scrutinised in future studies, such as commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement and role identity.
- d) Future research should also take into account the role of intervening variables that could play the role in the relationship between accounting graduates qualities and job performance. For instance, future research might incorporate the mediating variable (eg, training) or moderating variable (eg, firm size) that might enhance and increase the job performance.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on data analysis and the research questions, the following conclusions were drawn:

- a) Employers indicated that accounting graduates were well equipped with most of the qualities, in term of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics.
- b) Accounting graduates perform moderately in task performance, but highly in OCB.
- c) There was a significant relationship between accounting graduates' qualities (KSAO) and their job performance from the perspective of employers.
- d) Accounting graduates qualities (KSAO) were also significantly predicted and influenced their job performance.

Some of the employers questioned the type of technical knowledge graduates gain in their undergraduate studies, and the relevance and application of this to the workplace context. Given that the employers' placed emphasis on the importance of soft skills, this suggests that traditional undergraduate degrees that focus more on cognitive and technical development within a narrow discipline-based theoretical framework, may not be seen as able to produce the well-rounded, multi-skilled, flexible and adaptable graduates demanded by today's business organisations. As Boud and Garrick (1999, p. 2) note:

No longer are the pools of knowledge and expertise acquired in initial education sufficient for the 'new work order'. What is now required are the abilities to put that knowledge and expertise to use in unfamiliar circumstances, and so we find demands for 'flexibility', 'communication skills', 'teamwork' and so on.

The findings also indicate that employers want ‘work-ready’ graduates with prior work experience. These findings also confirmed previous study like Davison, Brown & Davison, (1993), which suggested that employers believe graduates have unrealistic expectations of life in the business world, and are generally deficient in interpersonal skills. While cooperative education programs can provide an ideal vehicle to bridge the gap between the world of work and the world of education, curriculum developers must be vigilant and ensure that they understand the world of work, and thus the competencies demanded of accounting graduates. As the focus shifts from ‘employment’ to ‘employability’, today’s accounting graduates will need to understand that their attitude to work is as important as the work itself. Furthermore, their ability and willingness to undertake professional development and training throughout their working life is not only expected, but will be a pre-requisite for lifelong work. As Zuboff (1988, p. 395) argued prophetically:

“Learning is no longer a separate activity that occurs either before one enters the workplace or in remote classroom settings ... learning is not something that requires time out from being employed in productive activity; learning is at the heart of productive activity”.

An important contribution that cooperative accounting education programs can make to students’ future work life is to help them to understand that the workplace is simply a different learning institution. It is a place where the curriculum is un-stated and the learning outcomes unclear but, importantly, it is a place where they must take responsibility for identifying their own learning needs and then do something about it, continuously.

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